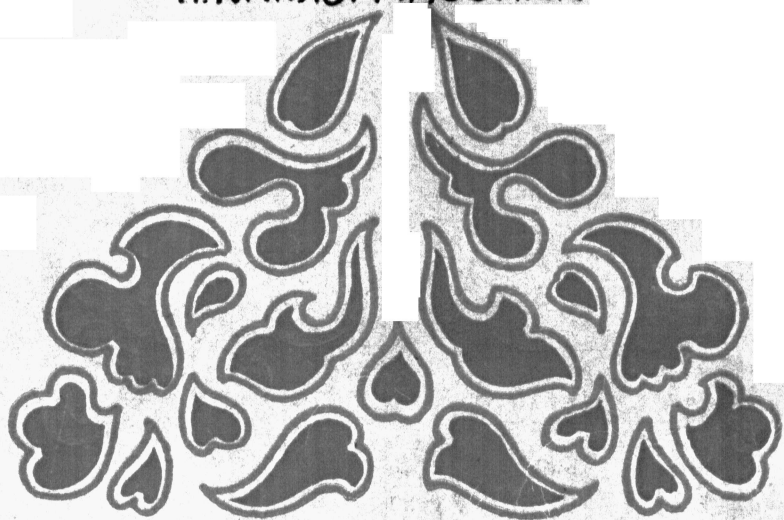
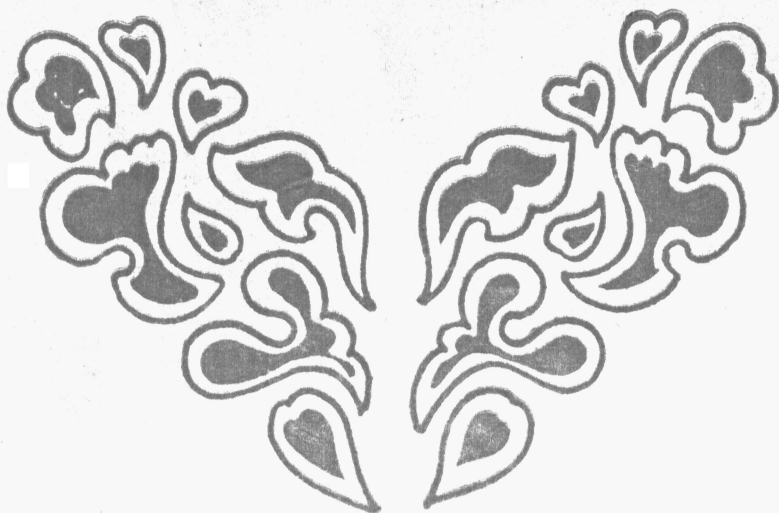


K. NAMBI ARURAN



GLIMPSES OF TAMIL CULTURE

BASED ON PERIYAPURĀṆAM



Glimpses of Tamil Culture

BASED ON PERIYAPURANAM

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Preface

This book is the result of the work done by me as a research student in the Department of Indian History, University of Madras, on the "Culture of the Tamils as revealed by the Periyapuram" between 1963 and 1966, for the M. Litt., Degree. An attempt has been made to present a complete picture of the Socio-economic, religious and cultural life of the Tamils based on a critical and intensive study of the Periyapuram the monumental Saiva hagiology attributed to the authorship of Sekkilar who lived at the court of the Chola king Kulottunga II (A. D. 1133-1150).

A number of studies on the Periyapuram have been made by scholars, the most prominent among them being the one by Dr. M. Rajamanickam. His work dealt mainly with the literary and religious aspects. Other researches based on the Periyapuram have also been directed primarily to assessing the importance of the work from the view point of religious history of South India. In all these historical value of the work as a whole has not been estimated. The historical material available in the Periyapuram has been classified and analysed systematically, supplementing the information with corroboratory evidence from other sources such as epigraphy and artistic remains. A comparative study of the work with earlier and contemporary works in Tamil has also been made.

I am deeply indebted to Dr. K. K. Pillay, then Professor of Indian History, for his valuable guidance during the major part of the period and to late Dr. M. Arokiaswami for the period from July 1966. I am grateful to the Vice-

Chancellor, University of Madras, and to the authorities of the University Grants Commission for having granted me the studentship and thereby the facilities for my work. I am also thankful to them for permitting me to publish the thesis in the present book form.

I am indebted to Dr. T. V. Mahalingam, then Professor of Ancient History and Archaeology, University of Madras, for permitting me to refer to the annual reports on South Indian Epigraphy. I am grateful to Dr. R. Champalakshmi who went through the drafts of the chapters and helped me in finalising them.

Nowadays very few publishers come forward to publish theses and the Koodal Publishers belong to that category. I am highly indebted to them. I very much appreciate the Vaigai Achagam who brought out this volume neatly at a short period.

K. NAMBI AROORAN

TO MARAIMALAI ADIGAL

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ABBREVIATIONS USED

A.H.	After Hijira
A.R.E.	<i>Annual Reports on (South) Indian Epigraphy</i>
C.K.S.	<i>Periyapurāṇam</i> edited by C. K. Subramania Mudaliar
E.C.	<i>Epigraphia Carnatica</i>
E.I.	<i>Epigraphia Indica</i>
I.A.	<i>Indian Antiquary</i>
J.I.H.	<i>Journal of Indian History</i>
J.M.U.	<i>Journal of the Madras University</i>
Q.J.M.S.	<i>Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society</i>
S.I.I.	<i>South Indian Inscriptions</i>
S.T.	<i>Sen Tamiḻ</i>
S.T.S.	<i>Sen Tamiḻ Selvi</i>
T.C.	<i>Tamil Culture</i>
T.P.	<i>Tamiḻ Poḻil</i>

1. The number of the stanza in the *Periyapurāṇam* is indicated merely by numbers given in C. K. S. edition of the *Periyapurāṇam* with commentary in Seven volumes e. g. 3949, 4210.

(For details see the key to the *Periyapurāṇam* stanza numbers)

2. *Tēvāram* hymns are indicated by the *padigam* number followed by stanza number of the *padigam* e. g. Appar 49-4, Sambandar 48-4.
3. The numbers of the inscriptions and the year of the *A. R. E.*, are noted thus: 350 of 1927.

Key to the Periyapurāṇam stanza numbers

(add the words “Nāyanār Purāṇam” or “Purāṇam”
wherever necessary)

CHAPTER I — TIRUMALAIC CIṚAPPU

- i. 1-10 (10) Payiram
- ii. 11-50 (40) Tirumalaic ciṛappu
- iii. 51-85 (35) Tirunāṭṭuc ciṛappu
- iv. 86-135 (50) Tirunagarac ciṛappu
- v. 136-146 (11) Tirukkūṭṭac ciṛappu
- vi. 147-349 (203) Taḍuttātkoṇḍa

CHAPTER II - TILLAIVĀḷANDAṆAR CARUKKAM

- 1. 350-359 (10) Tillaivāḷandaṇar
- 2. 360-403 (44) Tirunilakaṇḍa
- 3. 404-439 (36) Iyaṛpagai
- 4. 440-466 (27) Iḷaiyāṅkuḍi māṛa
- 5. 467-490 (24) Meypporuḷ
- 6. 491-501 (11) Viṇanmiṇḍa
- 7. 502-549 (48) Amarniti
- 550 (1) Sundarar tūdi

CHAPTER III - ILAIMALINDA CARUKKAM

- 8. 551-607 (57) Eṇipatta
- 9. 608-649 (42) Ēnādi nāda
- 10. 650-830 (181) Kaṇṇappa
- 11. 831-865 (35) Kuṇḡiliyakkalaya
- 12. 866-902 (37) Mānakkāṇjāra
- 13. 903-925 (23) Arivaṭṭāya
- 14. 926-966 (41) Ānāya
- 967 (1) Sundarar tūdi

CHAPTER IV - MUMMAIYĀL ULAGĀṆḌA CARUKKAM

- 15. 968-1016 (49) Mūrti
- 16. 1017-1030 (14) Muruga

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| 17. 1031-1040 (10) | Urudra Pasupati |
| 18. 1041-1077 (37) | Tirunāḷaippōvār |
| 19. 1078-1205, 128) | Tirukkupput-tonḍa |
| 20. 1206-1264 (59) | Sanḍēsura |
| 1265 (1) | Sundarar tūdi |

CHAPTER V — TIRUNINṚA CARUKKAM

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 21. 1266-1694 (429) | Tirunāvukkarasu |
| 22. 1695-1705 (11) | Kulachchirai |
| 23. 1706-1716 (11) | Perumīlalaik Kuṟumba |
| 24. 1717-1782 (66) | Kāraikkāl Ammaiṽār |
| 25. 1783-1827 (45) | Appūdiyaḍigaḷ |
| 26. 1828-1865 (38) | Tirunilanakka |
| 27. 1866-1897 (32) | Naminandiyāḍigaḷ |
| 1898 (1) | Sundarar tūdi |

CHAPTER VI — VAMBAṚĀVARIVANḌUC CARUKKAM

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 28. 1899-3154 (1256) | Tiruñāna Sambanda |
| 29. 3155-3563 (409) | Eṽyarkōn Kalikkāma |
| 30. 3564-3591 (28) | Tirumūladeva |
| 31. 3592-3617 (26) | Daṇḍiyaḍigaḷ |
| 32. 3618-3629 (12) | Mūrkka |
| 33. 3630-3634 (5) | Sōmāsīmāṛa |
| 3635 (1) | Sundarar tūdi |

CHAPTER VII — VĀRKONḌA VANAMULAIYĀḷ CARUKKAM

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| 34. 3636-3653 (18) | Sākkiya |
| 35. 3654-3659 (6) | Siṛappuli |
| 36. 3660-3747 (88) | Siṛuttoṇḍa |
| 37. 3748-3922 (175) | Kāḷaṛiṛṇṇaivār |
| 38. 3923-3929 (7) | Gaṇanāda |
| 39. 3930-3937 (8) | Kūṛṇṇuva |
| 3938 (1) | Sundarar tūdi |

CHAPTER VIII — POYYAḌIMAIYILLĀDA PULAVAR CARUKKAM

- | | | | |
|-----|-----------|------|---------------------------|
| 40. | 3939-3941 | (3) | Poyyaḍimaiyillāda Pulavar |
| 41. | 3942-3982 | (41) | Pugaḷch Chōḷa |
| 42. | 3983-3991 | (9) | Narasiṅga Munaiyaraiya |
| 43. | 3992-4011 | (20) | Adipatta |
| 44. | 4012-4021 | (10) | Kalikkamba |
| 45. | 4022-4038 | (17) | Kaliya |
| 46. | 4039-4045 | (7) | Satti |
| 47. | 4046-4053 | (8) | Aiyaḍigaḷ Kāḍavarkōn |
| | 4054 | (1) | Sundarar tudi |

CHAPTER IX — KARAIK KAṆḌAN CARUKKAM

- | | | | |
|-----|-----------|------|--------------------|
| 48. | 4055-4063 | (9) | Gaṇampulla |
| 49. | 4064-4068 | (5) | Kāri |
| 50. | 4069-4078 | (10) | Ninṛa Sīr Neḍumāṛa |
| 51. | 4079-4088 | (10) | Vāyilār |
| 52. | 4089-4094 | (6) | Munaiyāḍuvār |
| | 4095 | (1) | Sundarar tudi |

CHAPTER X — KAḌAL SŪḼNDA CARUKKAM

- | | | | |
|-----|-----------|------|---------------|
| 53. | 4096-4108 | (13) | Kaḷarsiṅga |
| 54. | 4109-4119 | (11) | Iḍaṅgaḷi |
| 55. | 4120-4126 | (7) | Seruttuṇai |
| 56. | 4127-4133 | (7) | Pugaḷttuṇai |
| 57. | 4134-4145 | (12) | Kōtpuli |
| | 4146 | (1) | Sundarar tudi |

CHAPTER XI — PATTARĀYP PAṆIVĀR CARUKKAM

- | | | | |
|-----|-----------|-----|------------------------------|
| 58. | 4147-4154 | (8) | Pattarāyp Paṇivār |
| 59. | 4155-4156 | (2) | Paramanaiyē Pāḍuvār |
| 60. | 4157 | (1) | Sittattaic Sivanpaḷē Vaittār |
| 61. | 4158-4159 | (2) | Tiruvārūr Pirandār |
| 62. | 4160-4162 | (3) | Muppōdum tirumēṇi tiṇḍuvār |
| 63. | 4163-4168 | (6) | Muḷu nīṇu pūsiya munivār |
| 64. | 4169 | (1) | Appālum aḍic cārndār |
| | 4170 | (1) | Sundarar tudi |

CHAPTER XII - MANNIYA SIRC CARUKKAM

65. 4171-4188 (18) Pūsalār
 66. 4189-4191 (3) Maṅgaiyarkkarasi Ammaiyaṛ
 67. 4192-4196 (5) Nēsa
 68. 4197-4214 (18) Kōchcheṅgaṭ Chōḷa
 69. 4215-4226 (12) Tirunilakaṇḍa Yāḷppāṇa
 70. 4227 (1) Saḍaiya
 71. 4028 (1) Isaiṇāni Ammaiyaṛ

CHAPTER XIII - VELLĀNAC CARUKKAM

72. 4229-4281 (53)

*C. K. S. Volumes**Stanzas covered*

I	1-550
II	551-1265
III - Part I	1266-1694
III - Part II	1695-1898
IV	1899-2529
V	2530-3154
VI	3155-3747
VII	3748-4281

The old idea of history connoting only political history has become obsolete now. The study of man in all aspects of his life is now taken to form the subject matter of history. Such a perspective has been made possible owing to the development of sciences like archaeology and anthropology. History deals with human action, the actions performed by individuals and groups of individuals called societies. Therefore, in recent times western historians have attempted to present history of "Societies" and "Cultures" in the place of "Nations".¹ Cultural history as such has not received due attention from scholars of Indian history in general and of Tamil history in particular. Therefore, an attempt is made here to present the culture of the Tamils as gleaned from the Tamil literary work the *Periyapurāṇam*.

The term 'Culture' may be explained as the way of life of any human group.² Culture modifies native endowments and in doing so it not only bestows blessings but also imposes obligations and demands the surrender of many personal liberties to the common welfare. Therefore the culture of an individual group is dependent upon the culture of the whole society to which that group or class belongs. Mathew Arnold explained culture as the dis-

1 Arnold Toynbee takes "Societies" and Oswald Spengler uses "Cultures" as units of historical study.

2 The way of life includes all the patterned, habitual actions and ideas and values – the members of a group perform, hold or cherish. H L. Shapiro, *Aspects of Culture*, p. 19.

language, and in the period of our study they occupied a somewhat wider area than they do now. The hill of Vēṅgaḍam was the recognized northern limit of the Tamil country and it included the western coastal strip which is now Kerala and a good part of the present day state of Mysore. The Tamils, who have occupied the above described area in peninsular India, from time immemorial, have evolved distinct social institutions and culture. It is also obvious that in the long stretch of centuries during which the Tamil culture flourished, the Tamils have borrowed freely from others and given them largely of their store in return.

Tamil culture is essentially seen in the Tamil way of life, a pattern of gracious living evolved during the centuries of Tamil history. It has been conditioned by the land, the climate, the social customs, the laws, the religions, the language, the literature and other factors associated with them in their daily life.

One serious handicap to a student who tries to study the social history of the people of Tamil country during the early centuries of the Christian era, is the dearth of reliable sources of evidence other than literature. Apart from the literary references to the modes of living such as the food habits, dress, ornaments, coiffure, dwelling places and so on, there is little of concrete evidence in the shape of sculpture or painting or other material remains prior to the 7th century A. D.⁸ Even after the 7th century A. D. material remains of a secular nature such as palaces, houses and other such monuments are totally absent, whereas religious monuments are found all over the country. The latter contain sculptural representations and paintings depicting contemporary life in all its varied aspects. Such artistic remains are particularly valuable for a study of the mode of dress, and ornamentation. They largely supplement and corroborate the evidences obtained from literature.

8 Recent excavations in the Tamil country conducted by various institutions of archaeological research have brought to light terracotta and other objects of daily use. Reports on these finds are awaited.

Inscriptions represent a more authentic source of study and much useful information may be found in them on contemporary society. Thus we have abundant source material from the 7th century A. D. onwards in the form of literature, epigraphy and monumental remains providing a comprehensive picture of cultural progress.

The literature of a country is an important source for its history. It is said that Indian literature, at least of the ancient and medieval times, sadly lacks dependable chronological frame-work and is replete with a profuse and indiscriminate inter-mixture of all kinds of legendary and mythical matter." The absence of professed historical works does not necessarily imply the absence of historical material in literature. "There is much of that kind of ore that can be mined in literature, but it requires the smelting furnace of criticism, with plenty of oxydising material in the shape of chronological data from other sources and slag of confirmatory evidence to separate the facts from the figments of imagination in which these get embedded".¹⁰

It has been already mentioned that religion forms the bedrock of human activity in the Indian way of life. So also Indian literature is predominantly religious. The greatest seers and writers have utilised literature as the main medium for preserving the tenets of religion and thus giving it a permanent and everlasting place in history. Even secular sciences such as grammar and astronomy were considered as auxiliaries to scripture.¹¹

The *Purāṇas* occupy a unique position in Indian literature, in Sanskrit as well as in Tamil. The *Purāṇas* are intended to illustrate in a practical form the theories expounded in the Vedas and Āgamas. They inculcate religion in the form of stories and anecdotes and are made available to the high and low alike. For a long time the *Purāṇas* were regarded as of little historical value on account of the

9 K.N. Sivaraja Pillai, *The Chronology of the Early Tamils*, p. 7.

10 S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, *Ancient India and South Indian History and Culture*, Vol. I, p. 421.

11 T.M.P. Mahadevan, *Outlines of Hinduism*, p. 28.

confused conglomeration of legendary and historical events. But now they are accepted as one of the important sources of the cultural history of India as they throw a flood of light on the various aspects of the life of the time. So far studies in two Sanskrit *Purāṇas* — *Vāyu Purāṇa* and *Matsya Purāṇa* — have been made from the point of view of cultural history.¹²

No attempt has however been made to study, on similar lines, the *Purāṇas* in Tamil literature, even though there are many *Purāṇas* of considerable historical value. The *Periyapurāṇam*, the *Kandapurāṇam* and the *Tiruvilaiyāḍal Purāṇam* are the three celebrated *Purāṇas* in Tamil literature. The *Periyapurāṇam* alone deals with the lives of devotees who were non-mythical and were historical personages. The *Kandapurāṇam* speaks of the mythical life of Lord Muruga and the *Tiruvilaiyāḍal Purāṇam* gives an account of the sports of Lord Siva.

The *Periyapurāṇam* is a hagiology composed by Sekkiḷār.¹³ It deals with the lives and deeds of sixty-three devotees and of nine groups of devotees of Siva, who lived between the 4th and 9th centuries A. D. The historical information provided by the *Periyapurāṇam* is largely trustworthy. The *Periyapurāṇam* has supplied some vital points for determining certain dates in South Indian history.¹⁴ The conversion of the Pallava king Mahēndravarmān from

- 12 D.R. Patil, *Cultural History from the Vāyu Purāṇa*.
S.G. Kantawala, *Cultural History from the Matsyapurāṇa*.

The pioneering work done in the study of *Purāṇas* by scholars like Wilson and Pargiter and the views expressed by them on the value of *Purāṇas* are discussed in detail by Patil and Kantawala in their introductory chapters of the above mentioned works.

- 13 Sekkiḷār titled his work as *Tiruttonḍar Purāṇam* meaning *Purāṇa* of Devotees. 10.
But it popularly came to be known as *Periyapurāṇam* meaning *Purāṇa* of the great devotees (*Periyār* = great devotees) or elaborate *Purāṇa* (*Periya* = elaborate voluminous) after its size.

- 14 *Infra*, Ch. II.

Jainism to Saivism, the conquest of Vātāpi by the Pallava general Parañjōti and the battle of Nēlvēli in which the Pāṇḍya ruler Ninṛa Sīr Neḍumāraṇ was the victor are some of the events well attested by other historical evidences. Further, there is abundant material in it providing an integrated picture of the cultural life of the Tamils. Though there is no denying the fact that there are many super-natural and mythical accounts contained in the work, such stories can easily be detected and eliminated in the process of a critical examination.

The author, Sēkkiḷār, was the prime-minister of a certain Chōḷa king. Scholars hold different views in identifying this Chōḷa king who patronised Sēkkiḷār. In his work Sēkkiḷār refers to his patron in ten different places as "Anapāya" and at one place as "Kulōttuṅga" and twice he pays tribute to his patron for plating with gold the roof of the Naṭarāja temple at Tillai.¹⁵ On the basis of these three pieces of evidence scholars identify him either with one or the other of Kulōttuṅga I (1070-1118), Kulōttuṅga II (1133-1150) and Kulōttuṅga III (1178-1216). But on the basis of inscriptional evidence and with the help of contemporary literary works we are in a position to identify the patron of Sēkkiḷār definitely as Kulōttuṅga II (A. D. 1133-1150), after analysing the validity of other identifications.

T. A. Gopinatha Rao in his *Chōḷa Vamsa Charita Surukkam* identifies the Anapāya referred to in the *Periṇṇapurāṇam* with Kulōttuṅga I and also attributes to him the act of plating with gold the roof of the temple at Tillai.¹⁶ This identification is not correct. There are two different shrines in the temple at Tillai, called 'Sīṟṟambalam' and

15 8, 22, 85, 98, 404, 552, 1213, 2745, 3949, 4210.

16 pp. 26-33.

Kulōttuṅga I is said to have ill-treated the Vaishṇavite saint Sri Rāmānuja and Sri Rāmānuja was compelled to leave the country to save his life from the wrath of the king. It is doubtful whether such a king with parochial views may have patronised so piously an eminent scholar like Sēkkiḷār.

'Pērambalam'. Kulōttuṅga I and Vikrama Chōḷa are said to have gilded the roof of the 'Siṟṟambalam' leaving the 'Pērambalam' as it was.¹⁷ It was Kulōttuṅga II who plated the 'Pērambalam' with gold and this fact is clearly mentioned in the *Periyapurāṇam*. The fact that Kulōttuṅga II plated with gold the roof of the 'Pērambalam' is also attested by an inscription from Tiruppuṟambiyam, assigned to his reign.¹⁸

T. V. Sadasiva Pandarathar and V. Sundaresa Vandaiyar identify the patron of Sēkkiḷār as Kulōttuṅga III after rejecting the identification with Kulōttuṅga II for the following reasons:¹⁹

(1) The court poet of Kulōttuṅga II was Oṭṭakkūttar and the poet has sung in praise of the king in "*Kulōttuṅga Chōḷan Ulā*". It is contended that Oṭṭakkūttar has not mentioned the act of gilding by Kulōttuṅga II in his *Kulōttuṅga Chōḷan Ulā*.

(2) While Oṭṭakkūttar himself was a learned poet, Kulōttuṅga II need not have asked Sēkkiḷār to compose the lives of the Śaiva saints in the form of the *Periyapurāṇam*.

(3) The court poet has not mentioned anything about the prime-minister Sēkkiḷār or his greatness as the composer of the *Periyapurāṇam*.

(4) The view of the epigraphist that the inscription at Tiruppuṟambiyam belongs to Kulōttuṅga II is not correct. The inscription of Rājarāja II (assigned by the epigraphists to Rājarāja III) who came after Kulōttuṅga II, is found on the wall above the inscription of Kulōttuṅga II. It is highly improbable that the inscription of a king who ruled earlier should be engraved at the bottom and the inscription of a later king at the top of it on the same wall.

17 C. M. Ramachandran Chettiar, "Sēkkiḷār" *S. T. S.* Vol. 10, 1932-33, pp. 140-141.

18 350 of 1927.

19 T. V. Sadasiva Pandarathar, *Piṟkāla Chōḷar Saridam*, Vol. II, pp. 165-167.

V. Sundaresa Vandaiyar, "Sēkkiḷār Kālam" *S. T.*, Vol. 35, 1937-38, pp. 236-239., *T. P.*, Vol. 13, 1937-38, pp. 463-465.

Therefore, the inscription below that of Rājarāja II should be that of Kulōttuṅga III who came after Rājarāja II and not that of Kulōttuṅga II. Since the act of gilding with gold the 'Pārambalam' of Tillai is mentioned in the inscription as well as in the *Periāpurāṇam*, the patron of Sēkkiḷār must have been Kulōttuṅga III.

The validity of the above points put forward to indentify the patron of Sēkkiḷār as Kulōttuṅga III may be questioned on the following grounds:- (1) Even though Oṭṭakkūttar, the court poet of Kulōttuṅga has not mentioned the act of Kulōttuṅga gilding the roof of the temple in *Kulōttuṅga Chōḷan Ulā*, he has mentioned the fact in the *Rajaraḷan Ulā*, sung in honour of Rājarāja III, son of Kulōttuṅga II. Therein he describes Rājarāja II as the son of the king who gilded the roof of the 'Pārambalam', thereby implying Kulōttuṅga II.²⁰

(2) Kulōttuṅga II may have found in Sēkkiḷār the most appropriate person to compose the hagiology.

(3) The absence of any reference to Sēkkiḷār by Oṭṭakkūttar in his *Ulā* does not prove that the former was not a contemporary of the latter and that of Kulōttuṅga II. It would be wrong to argue on the basis of negative evidence.

(4) On the basis of the location of inscriptions on the same wall it is not proper to infer that the inscription of the earlier king should be at the top and that of the later king should be at the bottom.

All these go to prove that the identification of the patron of Sēkkiḷār with Kulōttuṅga III is not correct and the identification with Kulōttuṅga II is more acceptable. There are also a few more inscriptions attesting to the fact that Kulōttuṅga II gilded with gold the roof of the 'Pārambalam' at Tillai which fact is referred to in the *Periāpurāṇam* by Sēkkiḷār.²¹

20 *Rāja Rājan Ulā*, 11. 59-65.

21 157 of 1902, *S. I. I.*, Vol. VII, No. 782., *A. R. E.* 1927, Part II, p. 24, 411 of 1902, *S. I. I* Vol. VII, No. 1044.

In his account of the lives of the Nāyanmārs, Sēkkiḷār, though belonging to the 12th century A. D., tries to avoid any reference to contemporary conditions and attempts to portray faithfully the conditions of the days of the Nāyanmārs, about whom he writes. In doing so he not only relied on the traditional accounts of these devotees conveyed through generations, but also made use of literary evidence and personal knowledge of the various religious centres, where sculptural representations of some of the Nāyanmārs existed. Sēkkiḷār evinces a keen historical sense while narrating the lives of the Nāyanmārs and the conditions prevalent in their times.

Sēkkiḷār never speaks of the Chōḷa capital of his times or for instance of the Brihadiśvara temple in the imperial city of Tañjāvūr. On the other hand he devotes a full chapter for a detailed description of the city of Tiruvārūr which occupied a prominent position in the time of the Nāyanmārs but lost its importance in Sēkkiḷār's time.²²

There was complete harmony between different religions and sects in the time of Sēkkiḷār and toleration was the rule of his times.²³ Under the Imperial Chōḷas the non-Hindu creeds like Jainism and Buddhism enjoyed royal patronage and endowments were provided for their monasteries.²⁴ But Sēkkiḷār faithfully describes the bitter struggle between the Jains and the Nāyanmārs such as Mūrti Nāyanār, Daṇḍi Aḍigaḷ, Naminandi Aḍigaḷ, Appar and Sambandar. He also gives an account of Sambandar's disputation with the Buddhists at Sāttamaṅgai. As a protagonist of the Śaiva faith he uses strong language in condemning the Jains and the Buddhists.²⁵

An interesting aspect of the administration of justice is revealed in the detailed account given by Sēkkiḷār of the trial in connection with the dispute that took place between Sundarar and an old Brahmin who claimed the former as

22 K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, p. 345.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 643.

24 *Ibid.*, pp. 655-657.

25 *Infra* ch. VI

his slave in the *Sabha* at Tiruveṇṇainallūr.²⁶ In giving out the details such as the presentation of the case, production of evidences and the pronouncement of judgement, Sēkkiḷār portrays them as they happened in the time of Sundarar. It is not correct to assume as has sometimes been done²⁷ that Sēkkiḷār gives an account of the judicial procedure of his own times. Sundarar in narrating this incident in his *Tēvāram* hymns clearly refers to the *Sabha* at Tiruveṇṇainallūr and also the production of *Āvaṇam* or documentary evidence.²⁸ Further the judicial officer who scrutinised the papers referred to in the *Periyapurāṇam* is called as *Karaṇattān* and such an official existed even in the time of the Pallavas.²⁹ So it is evident that Sēkkiḷār truly reflects the judicial procedure of the days when the Nāyanmārs lived and not of his own time.³⁰

26 *Infra* ch. III.

27 K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōlas*, p. 475.

28 “Tanmaiyyināl aḡiyēnai-t-tāmāṭkoṇḡa nāl sabhai mun”, 17. 2 “Veṇṇainallūril aṇṇuda-p-paḷa āvaṇam kāṭṭi” 68. 6.

29 The judicial courts were called *Karaṇa* and *Adhikaraṇa*. C. Minakshi, *Administration and Social life under the Pallavas*, p. 58.

30 K. A. Nilakanta Sastri himself accepts that the “Judicial procedure could not have changed very much between the time say of Rājārāja I and that of Kulōttuṅga II when Sēkkiḷār composed his great *Purāṇa*”. p. 575.

At another place Prof Sastri observes “The Pāṇḍya and Pallava inscriptions of the eighth and early ninth centuries show a system (of village government), very similar, but not quite so developed, in operation throughout Tamil country The life and functioning of rural institutions (like the *Sabha* at Tiruveṇṇainallūr), the ultimate cells that sustained national existence, were clearly little affected by dynastic wars and the shiftings of political power at the top”. p. 487.

So it is likely that the trial procedures that were in vogue at the time of Sundarar (A. D. 9th Century) remained unaltered in subsequent years.

In referring to the various types of temples visited by the *Tēvāram* hymnists and other Nāyanmārs, Sēkkiḷār takes care to portray them as they existed in the period of the Nāyanmārs.³¹ By the time of Sēkkiḷār numerous developments had taken place and separate shrines for goddesses came to be built in each temple. But there are no references to them in the *Periyapurāṇam*.³²

It is quite probable that as prime-minister commanding respect and comfort wherever he went, he toured extensively the places where these Nāyanmārs lived and obtained first hand information about them. He may have also had easy access to the required source material in writing his work. The absence of any reference in the work to contemporary personalities or institutions or events is noteworthy.

The circumstances which led to the composition of the *Periyapurāṇam* by Sēkkiḷār, is described by Umāpati Sivāchchārya in his "*Sēkkiḷār Purāṇam*" which is also known as "*Tiruttoṇḍar Purāṇa Varalāru*".³³

Sēkkiḷār, the author of the *Periyapurāṇam*, was born at Kunṇattūr, twenty miles from Madras city.³⁴ Though he was named Aruṇmoḷittēvar, he went by the popular name of Sēkkiḷār, as he belonged to that sect of the *Vēḷāla* caste.³⁵ He was a gifted scholar and an ardent devotee of Siva. He had for his patron-deity the God at Tirunāgēs-

31 *Infra.* ch, VIII - Fine Arts,

32 K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōlas*, p. 715.

33 Umāpati Sivāchchārya was also the author of eight of the fourteen philosophical treatises. *Vide infra.*, Ch. V, f. n. 3.

34 The house in which Sēkkiḷār lived now exists in the shape of a temple dedicated to him, with an icon of his as the presiding deity. There are no inscriptional evidence to attest these facts but by tradition they are believed to be so. The idol of Sēkkiḷār may not be considered as reflecting the true person but it might also be a product of the sculptor's imagination.

35 Sēkkiḷār is also said to have had another name "Rāmadēvan" M. Rajamanickam, *Periyapurāṇa Āraichchi*, pp. 38-39.

varam, near Kumbakōṇam in the Chōḷa country, and on this account constructed a temple in his native village by that name. In recognition of Sēkkiḷār's greatness the Chōḷa king Kulōttuṅga II honoured him by making him his Prime Minister and conferred on him the title "Uttama Chōḷa Pallavan". The king is said to have been greatly interested in the study of Jaina literature and especially the *Jivakachintāmaṇi*, the greatest of the Jaina works. As the theme of the *Jivakachintāmaṇi* is based on worldly life and earthly pleasures Sēkkiḷār suggested to the king that he, as a Saiva, should devote his interest to his own religion and spend his time in a useful manner. Sēkkiḷār then narrated to the king the lives and deeds of the Saiva saints. The king was so much delighted to hear these inspiring stories that he persuaded Sēkkiḷār to expound the life histories of the saints in a befitting manner. Sēkkiḷār went to Tillai (Chidambaram) and began to compose his celebrated work in the beautiful thousand pillared *maṇḍapam* of the temple, under the spell of divine inspiration.³⁶ A divine voice commanded him to begin the work with the words *Ulagelām*.³⁷

. After completing the work, he himself expounded it before a huge concourse of people headed by the king himself who honoured him with the title "Toṇḍar Sir Paravuvār" – 'the singer of the saints' glories', adorned him with the crown of knowledge and paid public homage to him. The *Periyapurāṇam* has been included as the Twelfth Book – '*Tirumuṟai*' in the Saiva canon.

The greatness of the *Periyapurāṇam* as a masterpiece of Tamil literature can hardly be overrated. The simple and melodious verses, numbering a little over four thousand, and enshrining in themselves the epic stories of the Saiva saints, have been a perennial source of inspiration for many. Its dignified theme as well as its chaste and simple

36 The Thousand pillared *maṇḍapam* has been recently renovated.

37 The last line of the concluding stanza of the work *ṣeṇḍa* also with the words '*Ulagelām*'.

style have made the work a favourite of the people, who venerated it as the Fifth Veda.³⁸

It has been the usual custom among the Hindus to ascribe the authorship of ancient works to gods or to great sages. Such works are often composed in the future tense i. e. as a record of future occurrences. Similarly the *Periyapurāṇam* is also believed to be of mythical origin and reference to this belief is made in Canto IX of '*Sivarahasya*' wherein God Śiva Himself in Mount Kailās is said to have revealed to His Consort Pārvati the future birth of the sixty-three Nāyanmārs who would be immortalised in the world.³⁹ However, for the purpose of the present study, it will suffice to examine the several sources on which the author of the *Periyapurāṇam* based his work.

Sēkkiḷār explicitly states in verses 37 to 39 that he followed Sundarar's '*Tiruttoṇḍattogai*' and Nambi Āṇḍār Nambi's '*Tiruttoṇḍar Tiruvandādi*' in composing his work.

Sundarar sang the '*Tiruttoṇḍattogai*' at the inspiration of Lord Śiva at Tiruvārūr. It consists of eleven stanzas wherein he lists in addition to the sixty-three Nāyanmārs, nine other groups of Nāyanmārs.⁴⁰ Sundarar gives only the names of these Nāyanmārs and it is not known on what basis he listed them. But a few details about some of these Nāyanmārs are given by Sundarar in his *Tēvāraṁ* hymns.⁴¹ Sundarar undoubtedly belongs to the 9th century A. D.⁴²

Nambi Āṇḍār Nambi slightly elaborated the '*Tiruttoṇḍattogai*' of Sundarar and composed the '*Tiruttoṇḍar Tiruvandādi*' wherein he briefly narrates the biography of each devotee. His work consists of eighty-seven verses of

38 K. V. Raman, "Sēkkiḷār – The Tamil saint of Kunna-thur", *The Tamil*, June 17, 1967.

39 J. M. Nallaswami Pillai, *Periyapurāṇam*, p. 164.

40 The eleven stanzas are given with brief explanation in C. K. S., Vol. I, pp. 59-61.

41 V. S. Chengalvaraya Pillai, *Tēvāra Oḷi-neri-Sundarar*, pp. 536-545. There is no evidence to show that Sundarar knew the existence of '*Sivarahasya*'.

42 *Infra.*, ch. II.

lines each and is included as the Eleventh *Tirumuṟai* in Saiva canonical literature. It was Nambi Āṇḍār Nambi who canonised the Eleven *Tirumuṟais* and to this list the *Periyapurāṇam* was added as the Twelfth *Tirumuṟai*. It is generally accepted that Nambi Āṇḍār Nambi was the contemporary of Rājarāja I (A. D. 985-1013), who also patronised him.⁴³

Besides these two works of Sundarar and Nambi Āṇḍār Nambi, it is likely that Sēkkiḷār, who was himself a great scholar, made use of earlier literary works also in composing the *Periyapurāṇam*. Particularly, the *Tēvaram* hymns of Appar, Sambandar and Sundarar, which form the first seven of the twelve *Tirumuṟais* and the literary compositions of the three Nāyanmārs - Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār, Aiyaḍigal Kaḍavarkōn and Chēramān Perumāḷ - which are included in the Eleventh *Tirumuṟai*, may have supplied much information relating to their life history. Nambi Āṇḍār Nambi, besides composing the '*Tiruttoṇḍar Tiruvandādi*' also composed six other pieces relating to Sambandar; they are (1) *Sambandar Tiruvandādi*, (2) *Sambandar Tiruchchaṇbaivritam* (3) *Sambandar Tirukkalambagam* (4) *Sambandar Tirumummanikovai*, (5) *Sambandar Tiruvulamalai* and (6) *Sambandar Tiruttogai*. These works of Sambandar along with the *Tēvaram* hymns of Sambandar, must have provided a wealth of information to Sēkkiḷār. No wonder he has narrated the life of Sambandar in more than one thousand verses.

There are many inscriptions dating prior to Sēkkiḷār, giving an account of the endowments made by rulers for the exposition of religious works and for enacting dramas with religious themes.⁴⁴ It is probable that such works and dramas which also dealt with the lives of some of the Nāyanmārs provided much information for Sēkkiḷār in composing the *Periyapurāṇam*. That Sēkkiḷār probably

43 K. R. Subramanya Ayyar, *The Age of the Nāyanmārs*, p. 96, K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōlas*, p. 637.

44 120 of 1931, S. I. I., Vol. II, No. 67, 128 & 129 of 1902, S. I. I., Vol. VII, Nos. 752 & 753, 535 of 1921.

made use of existing inscriptions in writing the *Periṇṇarāṇam* may be seen from the way he narrates in detail the story of Manu Nīdi Chōḷa as found in the inscription at Tiruvārūr temple.⁴⁵ Sēkkiḷar's reference to the son of Amarnīti Nāyanār in the Amarnīti Nāyanār Purāṇam may be based on an early sculptural representation of the saint with his child at Muḷaiyūr (Vaḷḷalārkkōil), a part of ancient Paḷaiyārai.⁴⁶ It is significant that neither *Tiruttoṇḍar Tiruvandādi* nor *Tiruttoṇḍattogai* refers to the son of Amarnīti, though the story of that saint is known to both the works.

In the latter half of the 10th century A. D., Chāvundarāya, a feudatory of Ganga Rājamalla IV, was rewarded by his suzerain with the title of Rāya for the service he had rendered to Jainism. The same chieftain, himself an author of repute, composed the '*Tirshashīlakshaṇa Mahāpurāṇa*' - the great Purāṇa of sixty-three great personalities - which treats of the legends of 24 Tīrthāṅkaras, 12 Chakravartis, 9 Bālabhadrās, 9 Nārāyaṇas and 9 Pratinārāyaṇas - 63 Jain characters in all. Some scholars are of the view that the above "sixty-three Jain saints of the *Mahāpurāṇa* may conceivably have been the proto-type of the sixty-three Nāyanmārs" of the *Periṇṇarāṇam*.⁴⁷ This view may be accepted on the following grounds:- As said earlier, Sēkkiḷar based his work on Sundarar's *Tirattoṇḍattogai* and Nambi Āṇḍār Nambi's *Tirattoṇḍar Tiruvandādi*. Sundarar in his work gives the names of 62 individual Nāyanmārs and 9 groups of Nāyanmārs, making 71 in all. Nambi Āṇḍār Nambi in his work includes the name of Sundarar in the list of individual Nāyanmārs thus making the number 63, besides the 9 groups of Nāyanmārs making 72 in all. He

45 164 of 1894, S. I. I., Vol. V, 456.

46 Illustration of the sculpture is given.

47 K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, "Hindu Renaissance of the Pallava Period", *The Hindu Weekly Magazine*, May, 21, 1961. M. S. Venkatasamy, *Samaṇamum Tamiḷum*, pp. 94-96.

explicitly states this in stanza 87 of his *Andādi*.⁴⁸ But Sēkkiḷār who elaborated these two works and composed the *Periyapurāṇam* mentions in no place the numbers of either the individual or the groups of Nāyanmārs.

However, to-day the phrase *Aṟupattumūvar* meaning 'sixty-three' individual Nāyanmārs (omitting the 9 groups of Nāyanmārs) is in popular usage and *Arupattumūvar Viḷā* a festival in honour of these 63 Nāyanmārs is held annually in all important Saiva centres, particularly in Mailāpūr during March–April. Kanarese works on the Nāyanmārs also follow the same number: 63 and are called *Aṟuvattu Mūvare Purādāna Charide* and *Aṟuvattu Mūvar Purādāna Chāraṇara Charide*. From these it is clear that a sort of sanctity came to be attached to the number 63 in referring to the Nāyanmārs. The earliest specific usage of this number is in the Jain work *Trishashṭilakṣhaṇa Mahāpurāṇa* mentioned above.

It is quite probable that the Saiva hagiologists adopted the Jain precedent in his regard. Hindu creeds like Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism had to face formidable rivals in non-Hindu creeds like Jainism and Buddhism for over five hundred years from about 4th century to 9th century A. D. (roughly from the time of the Kaṭabhras to the rise of the Imperial Chōḷas).⁴⁹ In their attempt to revive Śaivism the Śaivas may well have adopted certain features which made them popular. Therefore in order to undermine the importance of the 63 Jain personalities of the *Mahāpurāṇa*, the Śaivas also popularised sixty-three Nāyanmārs and Sēkkiḷār introduced their biographical accounts in the *Periyapurāṇam* to supersede the Jain beliefs. This inference gains strength from another fact. The Jains call the *Trishashṭilakṣhaṇa Mahāpurāṇa* as *Sri Purāṇa* and on the same model the Śaivas also called the *Periyapurāṇam* as *Sri Purāṇam*. In an inscription of the time of Rājādhirāja II (A. D. 1163–1178), at Tiruvorriyūr temple there is reference to the exposition of

48 "Kūṭṭamon pāṇō-ḍaṟupattu mūṇṟu tanippeyarā iṭṭum perundavat-tōreḷupattiraṇḍām....".

49 *Infra.*, ch. V,

Sundarar's life from the *Sri Purāṇa* which evidently means the *Periyapurāṇam*⁵⁰

It is not known on what basis Sundarar gives the list of the Nāyanmārs in his *Tiruttonḍattogai*. It is based neither on chronology nor on caste, geography or alphabetical order. Sundarar composed the *Tiruttonḍattogai* extempore at Tiruvārūr temple and in that process he may have recounted the names of these Nāyanmārs at random and this order was probably handed down to posterity by tradition. Nambi Āṇḍār Nambi who elaborated the *Tiruttonḍattogai* in his *Āṇḍādi* adopted the same order and Śaṅkīlār also faithfully follows it. Any change in the order would have been considered blasphemous.

It is very difficult to account for the proportion of stanzas assigned by Śaṅkīlār to the life stories of the Nāyanmārs. Out of the 4281 stanzas Śaṅkīlār devotes 1256 stanzas to narrate the life of Sambandar. The life of Sundarar is narrated at length in four different parts of the *Periyapurāṇam*, namely in Taḍuttaiḱonḍa Purāṇam, Ēyarkōṇ Kalikkāma Nāyanār Purāṇam, Kalarīrāṇivār Nāyanār Purāṇam and Vellāṇaiḱ Charukkam. Appar's life is told in 429 stanzas. The biographies of Kaṇṇappa Nāyanār and Tirukkuṟippuṭṭonḍa Nāyanār are given in a little more than one hundred stanzas each. For the lives of 24 Nāyanmārs Śaṅkīlār devotes less than ten stanzas for each Nāyanār. Of the total 72 Nāyanmārs, the lives of 42 Nāyanmārs are narrated in the first 4000 stanzas and the lives of 30 other Nāyanmārs are told in less than 300 stanzas. The disparity in the lengths of narration of the biographies of Nāyanmārs may be due to the abundance or paucity as the case may be of information available.

The *Periyapurāṇam* consists of a little more than four thousand verses and authentic publications of the text are available. The present study is based on the text published by C. K. Subramania Mudaliar, with elaborate commentary in seven volumes. The total number of verses as found in the commentary is 4281. The whole work is divided into

50 371 of 1911, *S. I. I.*, Vol. V, No. 1358, p. 494.

two parts or *Kāṇḍam*. They are further subdivided into twelve chapters called *Sarukkams*, each *Sarukkam* dealing with the life history or *Purāṇa* of five to eight devotees or Nayanmārs, excepting the last *Sarukkam* which exclusively deals with the life history of Sundarar. These twelve *Sarukkams* are preceded by an introductory chapter called *Tirumalaichchirappu*.

There are difference of opinion among scholars on the total number of stanzas in the *Periyapurāṇam*. But all scholars agree on the point that some verses have been inserted by later poets. According to Umāpati Sivāchchārya, who composed the *Tiruttonḍar Purāṇa Varalāru*, the total number is 4253. The *Periyapurāṇam* text published by Arumuga Navalar, which is considered to be a standard edition by Tamil Scholars, consists of 4286 verses, whereas that of C. K. Subramania Mudaliar has 4281 stanzas.⁵¹ Therefore it is inferred that there are about 28-33 stanzas added to the main body of the work by later poets, though it is difficult to point out those stanzas. But a careful study of the style of the work together with the sequence of certain stanzas and a comparative study of various published editions of the *Periyapurāṇam* have led scholars to identify such interpolations in the original text.

The following 28 stanzas are said to have been added to the text and they have been accepted as such in the present study:⁵²

1. 18	8. 1209	15. 2633	22. 4158
2. 944	9. 1621	16. 3188	23. 4163
3. 996	10. 2364	17. 3276	24. 4164
4. 997	11. 2603	18. 3340	25. 4165
5. 1176	12. 2613	19. 3642	26. 4166
6. 1177	13. 2614	20. 4023	27. 4167
7. 1178	14. 2632	21. 4155	28. 4171

51 The interpolations are also included in the present study because they do not in any way affect the purpose of our study.

52 C. K. Subramania Mudaliar, *Sēkkiḷār*, pp. 206-224; T. Somasundara Desikar, "Periyapurāṇa āraichchi", *S. T.*, Vol. 17, 1918-19, p. 345, Vol. 20, 1921-22, p. 321.

The following six are also mentioned as later additions in other publications: 1. 806a, 2. 806b, 3. 806c, 4. 806d, 5. 806e, 6. 4280a⁵³

Prior to the invention of printing, the *Periyapurāṇam* texts were written on palm leaves and were kept in the safe custody of religious *mutts*, temples and rarely with individual scholars. From time to time they were copied down and passed on from generation to generation. When printing in Tamil came into vogue in the Tamil country, the first edition of the *Periyapurāṇam* was published in 1843 by Mahalinga Iyer, the then Professor of Tamil in the Madras University.⁵⁴ He wrote a commentary on the first 1750 verses only. In 1859 Sabapathy Mudaliar of Kāñchipuram published the text of the first *Kāṇḍam* with commentary (first 1898 verses). Subburāya Nāniyār of Mailāpūr was the first person to bring out an edition with complete notes and summary in 1870. Arumuga Navalar of Ceylon published the text partially before his death in 1879 and it was completed in 1889 by Sadasiva Pillai-Notable among the editions published in the present century is that of V. Kaliyanasundaran of Tiruvārūr in 1910. This was re-published in 1934 with notes, summary, and with a *Tēvāram* index relating to the *Periyapurāṇam*. C K. Subramania Mudaliar of Coimbatore has brought out a standard publication of the *Periyapurāṇam* text with a detailed commentary running to 5710 pages in seven volumes. He commenced the work in 1935 and after nineteen years of devoted study completed it in 1954. This edition surpasses all other previous ones and has no parallel among other publications of a similar nature

To enable the common man to understand the lives of devotees which are in verse form in the *Periyapurāṇam*, scholars have brought out the biography of the devotees in Tamil prose. The first prose version of the *Periyapurāṇam*

53 Ibid., Vol. 17, p. 345.

54 T. K. Narayanasami, "Periyapurāṇa Padippu Varalāru", *T. P.*, Vol. 13, 1937-38, pp. 154-155.

was published in 1852 by Arumuga Navalar of Ceylon.⁵⁵ Ramalingam Pillai of Chidambaram brought out another prose version in 1879. The great sage of Vaḍalūr, Ramalinga Swamigal, published the biography of the *Periyapurāṇam* Nāyanmārs partially in the form of a book entitled *Manunūṛaikaṇḍa Vāsagam* in 1854. His disciple Velayuda Mudliar of Toḷuvur brought out a complete prose version in 1871. Recently many sub-standard prose versions have come out as popular editions.

The life history of the *Periyapurāṇam* Nāyanmārs has also been translated into English by a few scholars. Sabaratna Mudaliar of Jaffna wrote the biography of Sambandar in English in 1920.⁵⁶ In 1924 J. M. Nallaswami Pillai published a brief but almost complete account of the *Periyapurāṇam* Nāyanmārs in simple style.⁵⁷

The life histories of the *Periyapurāṇam* Nāyanmārs were popular not only in the Tamil country but also in other parts of South India. They gained currency in the neighbouring Telugu and Kannada countries also and were celebrated and immortalised through their respective literatures. While the rationalistic differences of Hinduism were strengthened by the authors of the various systems of philosophy, the Nāyanmārs and the Ālvārs supplied the emotional appeal by holding forth an assurance of immortality through faith, devotion and prayer. Hence their popularity.

The Tamil word 'Nāyanār' meaning 'devotee' is styled in Telugu as 'Nāyanārlu' and the sixty-three Nāyanmārs are

55 Ibid., p. 155.

56 Ibid., p. 155.

57 Nallaswami Pillai has narrated the biography of forty-four Nāyanmārs in his book. There are also two unpublished works relating to the *Periyapurāṇam*, from literary point of view. M. Rajamanickam, *A critical study of Sēkkiḷār and his historical material*—a dissertation submitted to the University of Madras for M. O. L. degree.

M. E. Saraswathy, *Women characters in the Periyapurāṇam*—a dissertation submitted to the University of Madras for M. Litt. Degree.

referred to as 'Aṟuvattu-mūvuru-Nāyanārulu'.⁵⁸ It is said that the earliest references in Telugu literature to some of the Nāyanmārs are found in the '*Sivatatvasāramu*' of Mallikārjuna Paṇḍita, who lived between A. D. 1100 and 1180. In Nannichōḍa's '*Kumāra Sambhavam*' one of the early Śaiva classics in Telugu there is reference to Tirunilakaṇṭha Nāyanār. But the credit of narrating the biographies of all the sixty-three Nāyanmārs goes to Palkuriki Sōmanātha (A.D. 1190 - 1260), the famous Telugu poet and the apostle of Virāṣaivism. In his work '*Paṇḍitārādhyā Charidhira*' Sōmanātha enumerates the names of all the sixty-three Nāyanmārs. In his earlier work '*Basavapurāṇamu*' Sōmanātha links some of the stories of the *Periapurāṇam* Nāyanmārs with the main story of Basava.

In this connection it should be noted that the names of the Nāyanmārs, as given by Sōmanātha, slightly differ from those found in the *Periapurāṇam*, though the themes are the same.⁵⁹ Later Telugu poets generally followed Sōmanātha who first recorded these stories current in popular tradition. There are also changes in minor details in the life histories of the Nāyanmārs.

Viśvēśvara Siva Dēśika, the religious preceptor and minister of Kākati Gaṇapati Dēva (A. D. 1199-1260) refers to Śiṟuttoṇḍar, Sundarar and Tirunilakaṇṭhar in his '*Śiva Dēvādhṛimaṇi Śatakamu*' which is not extant now. In

58 M. Audilakshmi, "Tamil Nāyanmārs in Telugu Literature", *T. C.*, Vol. 6, 1957, pp. 71-77.

59 Name of the Nāyanmars found in the <i>Periapurāṇam</i> :	Corresponding names in the <i>Basava Purāṇamu</i> :
Gaṇampullar	Dipada Kaliyar
Sundarar	Oḍaya Nambi
Iḍaṅgaḷi Nāyanār	Iḍayāṇḍanguḷi Māra
Gaṇanāda	Gaṇapāla
Tirnnilakaṇṭha	Kummari Guṇḍayya
Sambandar	Pillai Nāyanār
Sakkiya Nāyanār	Sāmkhya Toṇḍa

• The incident of Māṇikkavāsagar transforming jackals into horses is narrated and the saint is called Chokka Nāyanār.

Sarabhankaliṅga's *Sataka* written about A. D. 1300 there are references to some of the Nāyanmārs and this work is available. Ravipati Tripurāntaka a poet of the post-Kāka tiya period refers to some incidents in the lives of the Nāyanmārs in his work '*Tripurāntakadahanamu*'. Srinātha one of the famous Telugu poets in his poetical work '*Haravilāsamu*' deals with the story of Śiṛuttoṇḍar. In many other religious works in Telugu there are references to the Nāyanmārs.

In the 18th century two outstanding works were produced relating to the Nāyanmārs. One is the prose work known as *Sivabhaktavilāsamu* by Kaluve Nañjarāja of Mysore. It is a voluminous work in 75 *adhyayas* or chapters divided into five cantos. The stories of all the Nāyanmārs are dealt with in this work. The other work is *Harabhaktavilāsamu* by Attalūri Pāpa Kavi, containing nearly 5000 verses in five cantos. This work stands on par with the *Periyapurāṇam* in Tamil.⁶⁰

The lives of the Nāyanmārs spread to the Kanarese country (Mysore) also and attracted the attention of Kanarese writers. The life history of the Nāyanmārs are found in the following works :-

'*Trishastī Charide*', '*Aṇuvattu Mūru Purādana Chāraṇara Charide*' and '*Sārana Lilāmrudam*'.⁶¹

It may be of interest to note the record of a grant by Nañja Rāja (A. D. 1767) of sixty-six metal images for processional purposes to the Nañjaṅgūd temple in Mysore. The sixty-six metal images represent the Nāyanmārs celebrated in the *Periyapurāṇam*.⁶² From the list given in the *Epigraphia Carnatica* we find the omission of some of the *Periyapurāṇam* Nāyanmārs and inclusion of others and also slight changes in the names of some. The installation of images as well as the literary works eulogising the Śaiva

60 M. Audilakshmi, *Ibid*, 76.

61 E. C., Vol. IV.

62 The names of the saints are found engraved on the pedestals of the images. However, in the place of 63 Nāyanmārs there are 66 at Nañjaṅgūd.

saints show the popularity of the life history of the Nāyanmārs in the Kanarese country. This may have been the work of the Liṅgāyaṭs or Vira Śaivas who championed the cause of Śaivism.

There are two works in Sanskrit dealing with the lives of the *Periyapurāṇam* Nāyanmārs – *Upamanya Bhaktavilāsa* and *Agastya Bhaktavilāsa*. Of the two *Agastya Bhaktavilāsa* alone has been published and *Upamanya Bhaktavilāsa* is still in manuscript form and follows closely the account of Śekkiḷār's *Periyapurāṇam*. Both these works profess to be part of *Skanda Mahāpurāṇam* ⁶³

The names of the authors of the two Sanskrit works are not known and there are no means of ascertaining the date of their composition. It is curious that in spite of the absense of evidence regarding their authorship and dates some scholars consider the work of Śekkiḷār as a translation of these Sanskrit works.⁶⁴ These scholars base their arguments on the fact that Śekkiḷār introduces Upamanyu Mahārishi as narrating the story to his disciples on the eve of Sundarar's entry into Kailās. This view is not acceptable because Śekkiḷār professes to have based his work on the 'Tirtoṇḍattogai' of Sundarar and the 'Tiruttoṇḍar Tiruvandādi' of Nambi Āṇḍār Nambi. Hence the *Periyapurāṇam* is in all probability an original work, independent of the two Sanskrit works. This introduction of Upamanyu Mahārishi in the chapter on Tirumalaichchiṇṇappu may have been made use of by the Sanskrit works and one of the Sanskrit versions has been named as *Upamanya Bhaktavilāsa*. Considering the fact that the *Periyapurāṇam* Nāyanmārs belonged to the Tamil country, the accounts of their lives and deeds must have been current in the Tamil language and tradition for quite a long time. Therefore it is not correct to consider the *Periyapurāṇam* as a work translated from any other language.

63. J. M. Nallaswami Pillai, *Periyapurāṇam*, Introduction pp. xv-xvi.

64. Ibid., p.xv.

In the following chapters an attempt is made to give a critical survey of the various aspects of the cultural life of the Tamils as revealed by the *Periyapurāṇam*. The age of this culture which is largely determined by the dates of the Nāyanmārs is discussed in chapter two. The art of government as reflected in the work is an index to the high moral and ethical standards of the Tamils in public life. The picture of social life that one gets from the work is more or less complete and is dealt with in chapter four. But it is for the religious history of the Tamil country that the *Periyapurāṇam* is an indispensable source and this aspect receives due attention in the chapters on Religion. The contribution of the Nāyanmārs to literature is examined in chapter seven and finally the standard of attainment in the various fields of Fine Arts are assessed in chapter eight.

N. B. Oft repeated words such as the *Periyapurāṇam*, Nāyanmārs, Sēkkiḷar etc. will appear without diacritical marks in the following pages.

The Periyapurānam speaks of the lives and deeds of sixty-three individual Nayanmars and nine groups of devotees. They belonged to different parts of the Tamil country and lived in different times. Though the historicity of most of the Nayanmars is established, the chronology of some of them is still uncertain. While speaking of the culture of the Tamils during the days of the Nayanmars it is essential to discuss and fix the lower and upper chronological limits. This will enable us to understand the period of the Nayanmars and to attempt a survey of the cultural conditions in their times.

The age of the Tamil *Saṅgam* has been widely accepted by scholars as the first three centuries of the Christian era and the anthologies *Eṭṭutogai*, *Pattuppāṭṭu*, *Padineṇ-Kīlkaṇakku* and the twin epics *Śilappadikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai* belong to this period.¹ In the existing *Saṅgam* literature there is no reference to any one of the sixty-three Nayanmars mentioned by Sekkilar in the Periyapurānam. But some scholars identify the Chōḷa king Seṅgaṇān referred to in the 74th verse of the *Puṇānūru* of the *Saṅgam* period with Kōchcheṅgaṭ Chōḷa Nāyanār of the Periyapurānam. This identification is not correct. The name Seṅgaṇān is mentioned in the colophon to the above-mentioned verse. It is a generally accepted view that the colophons were added by later writers who edited those verses. Kōchcheṅgaṭ Chōḷa Nāyanār of the Periyapurānam is said to

1 V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar, *Studies in Tamil Literature and history*, pp. 73-77.
K. G. Sesha Aiyar, *Chēra Kings of the Saṅgam period*, chapter III.
See also N. Subrahmanian, *Saṅgam Polity*, pp. 24-25,

have built numerous temples all over the Tamil country.² There is no reference in the *Puṛānānūṟu* to the construction of such temples by Seṅgaṇān. Further there was no necessity for the construction of so many temples to popularise Śaivism in the *Śaṅgam* period when there was complete harmony among the different religious sects in the Tamil country. Sekkilar mentions that Kōchcheṅgaṭ Chōḷa Nāyanār dedicated himself to divine service at Tillai (Chidambaram) and also built dwelling places for the Brahmins there.³ In the *Śaṅgam* period Tillai was not a popular sacred centre of Śaivism. All these go to prove that Seṅgaṇān of the *Śaṅgam* period is not identical with Kōchcheṅgaṭ Chōḷa Nāyanār of the Periyapurānam.⁴ Therefore it is obvious that the Nayanmars came after the *Śaṅgam* age.

Some scholars equate Kōchcheṅgaṭ Chōḷa Nāyanār of the Periyapurānam with Seṅgaṇān, hero of the poetical work – the *Kaḷavaḷi Nāṟpadu* by Poygaiyār. This identification is also not acceptable. The *Kaḷavaḷi Nāṟpadu* is one of the Eighteen Minor works of the *Śaṅgam* literature. Therefore it is obvious that Seṅgaṇān referred to in the *Kaḷavaḷi Nāṟpadu* belonged to the *Śaṅgam* period. The work contains forty stanzas describing in a very realistic vein Seṅgaṇān's battle with the Chēra king Kaṇaikkāl Irumpoṟai. Kaṇaikkāl Irumpoṟai is assigned to the last quarter of the second century A. D.⁵ In view of the close similarity between the military exploits described in the

2 4208.

3 4212.

4 M. Rajamanickam, *Periyapurāṇa āraichchi*, pp. 86–94,

5 K. N. Sivarajapillai, *The chronology of the early Tamils*, Table III – The Chēra genealogy.

Some scholars assign a slightly different date to the Chēra king. A. Chidambaranar assigns Kaṇaikkāl Irumpoṟai to the first century B. C. *Chērar Varalāru*, pp. 138–148.

This author also commits the mistake of identifying Seṅgaṇān of the *Kaḷavaḷi* with Kōchcheṅgaṭ Chōḷa Nāyanār.

Puṛaṇānūṟu and the *Kaḷavaḷi Nāṟpadu*, it is obvious that the Seṅgaṇān mentioned in the *Puṛaṇānūṟu* and the Seṅgaṇān mentioned in the *Kaḷavaḷi* are identical. It is widely accepted that the *Eṭṭuttogai* and *Padineṇ-Kiḷkaṇakku* works of which these two form part, are *Saṅgam* works. Therefore it follows that Seṅgaṇān referred to in the above works belonged to the *Saṅgam* period.⁶

The *Kaḷavaḷi* never speaks of Seṅgaṇān as a devotee of Śiva or of his construction of temples dedicated to Śiva or of his mythical ancestral account. On the other hand in the *Periyapurāṇam* or in the *Tiruttoṇḍattogai* or in the *Tiruttoṇḍar Tiru Andādi* there is no reference to Kōchcheṅgaṭ Chōḷa Nāyanār's encounters with the Chēra king. So it is evident that Seṅgaṇān of the *Kaḷavaḷi Nāṟpadu* is an entirely different person from Kōchcheṅgaṭ Chōḷa Nāyanār of the *Periyapurāṇam*.

Historians assign the Pallava conquest of Kāñchi and Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam to the end of the 3rd century or to the beginning of the 4th century A. D. After Samudragupta's invasion of the South in the middle of the 4th century A. D. the Pallavas lost much of their territory and ruled the diminished kingdom for about two centuries in an unspectacular way. Further south in the Tamil country after the *Saṅgam* epoch we hear that a rather mysterious and ubi-

- 6 Some scholars with an anxiety to give an early date for the Vaishṇavite saint Poygai Āḷvār, have identified him with Poygaiyār, the author of the *Kaḷavaḷi*. The religious hymns of Poygai Āḷvār are entirely different in style and composition when compared with the *Kaḷavaḷi* of Poygaiyār. Further it is difficult to consider whether such a pious hymnist like Poygai Āḷvār could have descended to the level of composing poems in praise of an earthly monarch. "... that the author of *Kaḷavaḷi* is different from and anterior to the Vaishṇavite saint is clear, because while Poygai Āḷvār, true to the tradition of his sect very emphatically says "he will not praise any but God", in the *Kaḷavaḷi*, the Chōḷa king Seṅgaṇān is eulogized greatly. The exclusively Vaishṇavite zeal noticeable in the Āḷvār is a definite post-*Saṅgam* outlook".

N. Subrahmanian, *Pre-Pallavan Tamil Index*, p. xi.

quitos enemy of civilisation, the evil rulers called the Kaḷabhras came and upset the political condition which was restored only by the more or less simultaneous emergence of the Pāṇḍyas and the Pallavas.⁷ This period (4th century A. D. to 6th century A. D.) has been called the "Dark Period" in South Indian history.⁸

Many suggestions have been put forward by scholars regarding the origin of the Kaḷabhras. Some identify them with the Kaḷavar, a predatory tribe in occupation of the northern frontier of Tōṇḍaimaṇḍalam, whose chief Pulli of Tirupati, is mentioned in the *Saṅgam* works.⁹ Another group of scholars trace the origin of the Kaḷabhras to the *Mutraraiyars*,¹⁰ and a few others to the Kaḷappaḷa family.¹¹ Whatever may be the origin, scholars agree unanimously on the fact that the Kaḷabhras belonged to an alien dynasty who entered and occupied the traditional Tamil kingdoms. Ultimately they were put down by about 575 A. D. when Siṅhaviṣṇu of the Pallava line conquered Tōṇḍaimaṇḍalam and the Chōḷa country up to Tiruchirappalli and Kaṇṇakōn established himself at Madurai as the Pāṇḍya king. From that time onwards there is a regular line of the Pallavas and the Pāṇḍyas ruling, but it took a longer time for the Chōḷas to recover from the blow for we are not able to trace the genealogy of the Chōḷas of that period till Vijayalaya (A. D. 830). But they remained as feudatories under the Pallavas ruling over a small area and their capital was

7 K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Culture and history of the Tamils*, pp. 18 - 19.

8 According to some scholars this "Dark Period" consists of the latter part of the 5th, then the 6th and the commencement of the 7th centuries A. D.
M. Raghava Aiyangar, "The Kaḷabhras in South India", *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. 8, 1929, pp. 74-79.

9 S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, Introduction to the *Pallavas of Kāñchi* (by R. Gopalan). pp. 17-24.

10 M. Raghava Aiyangar. "The Kaḷabhras in South India" *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. 8, 1929, pp. 74-79.

Paḷayārai, three miles from modern Kumbakoṇam in the Tanjāvūr district.

The history of the Pallavas of Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam begins from the reign of Śimhaviśṇu and comes to a close with their downfall in the latter half of the 9th century A. D. So also a more or less connected account of the Pāṇḍyas can be given from the period of Kaṇṭakōṇ till the conquest of the Pāṇḍya country in the 10th century A. D. by the Imperial Chōlas.

Having attempted in the preceding paragraphs a brief summary of the political history of the Tamil country from the Saṅgam age to the period of the Chōlas, we may now proceed to discuss the chronology of the Nayanmars. The synchronism of Appar with Mahēndravārman I Pallava, of Saṁbandar with Arikēsari Mājavārman Pāṇḍya, of Siṟuttoṇḍa Nayanār with Paramēśvaravarman I Pallava and of Sundarar and Chēraman Perumāḷ with Nandīvarman III Pallava – is the sheet anchor of the chronology of the Nayanmars.

Saint Tirunāvukkarasu who is also known as Appar, has composed nearly 3000 verses which constitute the fourth, fifth and sixth *Tirumuṭāis*. Sekkilar mentions him as a contemporary of Guṇabhara, a Pallava king.¹² Sekkilar narrating the life of Appar says that Guṇabhara persecuted Appar for his conversion from Jainism to Saivism. Later Guṇabhara himself embraced Saivism, demolished the Jain temple and mutt at Pāṭaliputra, built a Śiva temple and named it Guṇādharaṁvichcharam.¹³ The Pallava king Mahēndravārman I (A. D. 600–630) had the epithet *Guṇabhara* which is the same as *Guṇādhara*.¹⁴ One of his ins-

11 P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar, *History of the Tamils*, pp. 535–537.

12 1411.

13 1355–1389, 1411.

14 A. R. E., 1900, p. 5.

Ep. Ind., Vol. III, p. 278.

R. Gopalan, *Pallavas of Kāñchi*, p. 88.

C. Minakshi, *Administration and Social Life under the Pallavas*, p. 252.

criptions on the Tiruchirāppaḷḷi rock cut temple confirms his conversion to Saivism.¹⁵ So scholars are of the opinion that this Mahēndravarmaṇ was the contemporary of Appar.

According to the Periyapurāṇam, saint Tiruḡṇāṇasambandar otherwise known as Sambandar was the younger contemporary of Appar.¹⁶ Sambandar in the course of his itinerary met Saint Siṟuṭṭonḍar, one of his contemporaries when he visited Tiruchcheṅgāṭṭaṅḡuḍi. He stayed in Siṟuṭṭonḍar's house for sometime and also composed a *padigam* in praise of his devotion.¹⁷ Sekkilar mentions that Siṟuṭṭonḍar was the commander-in-chief of a Pallava king and that he raided the city of Vātāpi and brought the treasures of the enemy to Kāñchi.¹⁸

Scholars are of opinion that Siṟuṭṭonḍar was the commander-in-chief of Narasimhavarman I (A. D. 630 – 668), son of Mahēndravarmaṇ I. Narasimhavarman surnamed as Mahāmalla conquered Vātāpi, capital of the Chāḷukyas, defeating its king Pulakēsin II.¹⁹ There was also another invasion of Vātāpi referred to in the Kūṟam plates of Paramēśvaravarman I.²⁰ The Kūṟam plates give a detailed account of the battle in which Paramēśvaravarman I defeated the Chāḷukya king Vikramāditya I. This fact is also confirmed by the inscriptions of Rājasimha at Kāñchipuram.²¹ According to scholars the Pallava invasion must have taken place between A. D. 674 and A. D. 680.²² To identify

The Terms *Guṇabhara* as well as *Guṇadhara* convey the same meaning as one 'rich in character'.

15 *S. I. I.*, Vol. I, Nos. 33 and 34, p. 29.

16 They have met thrice, 1446–1454, 1496–1554, 1657–1666, 2366–69.

17 3665.

18 R. Gopalan, *Pallavas of Kāñchi*, p. 98.

Ep. Ind., Vol. III, p. 277.

S. I. I., Vol. II, p. 511. v. 11.

20 *S. I. I.*, Vol. I, p. 154.

21 *S. I. I.*, Vol. I, pp. 13 and 23.

22 N. Venkataramanayya, "Did Paramēśvaravarman I capture Vātāpi?" *Madras Christian College Magazine*, Quarterly Series, 1927, pp. 236–242.

Śiṟuttoṇḍar as the commander-in-chief of Paramēśvara-varman I is more appropriate for the following reasons: From the Periyapurānam it is learnt that Śiṟuttoṇḍar, after his Vātāpi expedition voluntarily retired from the post of commander-in-chief, settled down in his native place of Tiruchcheṅgāṭṭaṅkuḍi and spent his time in worshipping Śiva and in entertaining the devotees of Śiva.²³ This must have taken place after A. D. 680. At that time Śiṟuttoṇḍar had the unique opportunity of entertaining Sambandar when the latter visited Tiruchcheṅgāṭṭaṅkuḍi. Sambandar, as will be seen in the following paragraph, was the contemporary of the Pāṇḍya king Ninṟa Śir Neḍumāraṇ who has been identified with Arikēsari Parāṅkusa Māra-varman (A. D. 670 – 710). This synchronism lends support to our view to identify the contemporary of Śiṟuttoṇḍar as Paramēśvara-varman I (A. D. 670 – 710), rather than Narasimha-varman I (A. D. 630 – 668).

From the Periyapurānam we learn that Sambandar converted the Pāṇḍya king Ninṟa Śir Neḍumāraṇ from Jainism to Saivism.²⁴ This Pāṇḍya king himself is included in the list of sixty-three saints and he is stated to have won the battle of Nelvēli. Ninṟa Śir Neḍumāraṇ has been identified with Arikēsari Parāṅkusa Māra-varman (A. D. 670–710).²⁵ The Vēlvikkūḍi grant confirms this view and the victory in the Nelvēli battle is assigned to Māra-varman.²⁶

Thus the statements of Sekkilar are well corroborated by inscriptions and other historical facts. So it is clear that Appar and Sambandar lived in the 7th century A. D.

Just like Appar, Sambandar also composed nearly 3000 verses and visited more than 300 shrines. His compositions are classified under the first three *Tirumūṟais* while those of Appar constitute the next three *Tirumūṟais* of the total twelve.

23 3665–70

24 2504–2793.

25 K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Pāṇḍyan Kingdom*, pp. 53–54.

26 *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. XVII, p. 300, 11. 53–54.

The sixty-three Nayanmars or saints of whose life the Periyapuram deals can be chronologically classified under four headings, namely

1. Nayanmars prior to Appar – Sambandar epoch	17
2. Contemporaries of Appar and Sambandar	11
3. Nayanmars in the interval between Appar – Sambandar epoch and Sundarar	22
4. Contemporaries of Sundarar	13
Total	63

1. NAYANMARS PRIOR TO APPAR-SAMBANDAR EPOCH – 17

Seventeen Nayanmars lived prior to Appar and Sambandar. There are references in the first six *Tirumuṟais* to some of these seventeen Nayanmars and from the account of their lives in the Periyapuram, it appears that they were not the contemporaries of Appar and Sambandar. They were :

1. Kōchcheṅgaḷ Chōḷa Nāyanār
2. Kūṟruva Nāyanār
3. Mūrti Nāyanār
4. Puḡaḷ Chōḷa Nāyanār
5. Eṟipatta Nāyanār
6. Aiyāḡiḡaḷ Kāḡavarkōn Nāyanār
7. Naminandi Aḡiḡaḷ Nāyanār
8. Daṇḡi Aḡiḡaḷ Nāyanār
9. Sākkiya Nāyanār
10. Tirumūladeva Nāyanār
11. Saṇḡēśura Nāyanār
12. Kaṇṇappa Nāyanār
13. Kāraikkāl Ammaiṟ
14. Gaṇampulla Nāyanār
15. Amarniti Nāyanār
16. Arivāṭṭāya Nāyanār
17. Puḡaḷttuṇai Nāyanār

Though it is not possible to arrange them in any definite chronological order, it is possible to assign these seventeen Nayanmars to a date prior to Appar-Sambandar

in the light of certain facts connected with the life of these Nayanmars as gleaned from the *Tēvāram* and epigraphical records.

It has been already explained that Kōchcheṅgaṭ Chōḷa Nayanar belonged to the post-*Saṅgam* period. Appar and Sambandar have extolled Kōchcheṅgaṭ Chōḷa's greatness in *Tēvāram* at many places.²⁷ Kōchcheṅgaṭ Chōḷa was not only a monarch of high military prowess who conquered kingdoms but was also a patron of arts and literature. According to Sekkilar, Kōchcheṅgaṭ Chōḷa Nayanār built temples all over the Chōḷa country and also provided living quarters for the Brahmins at Tillai.²⁸ Tirumaṅgai Mannan (8th century A. D.), one of the Vaishṇava Āḷvārs also refers to his construction of temples of a new type on high terraces.²⁹ That he was no narrow sectarian is conclusively proved by the fact that his devotion is praised by both Śaiva and Vaishṇava hymnists. Such a tolerant spirit was characteristic of the Śaiva and Vaishṇava saints of the pre-Appar-Sambandar period.³⁰ From the literary references hereto mentioned it is certain that he lived anterior to the days of Tirumaṅgai Āḷvār and the *Tēvāram* hymnists (7th century A. D.).

In one of the later Chōḷa inscriptions providing a genealogical list of early Chōḷa kings, Kōchcheṅgaṭ Chōḷa is placed before Karikāla.³¹ The *Kaliṅgattupparaṇi* (11th century A. D.) also does the same. Two other inscriptions of the later Chōḷas place Kōchcheṅgaṭ Chōḷa after Kari-

27 Appar 49-4, 233-5, 236-3, 278-6, 287-8, 288-8, 296-6. Sambandar 48-6, 159-5, 276-2, 4, 6, 277-1, 2, 5, 9, 3, 308-9.

28 4208, 4212.

29 *Periya Tirumōḷi*, VI-6.

30 "..... religious opinions and ideas had not taken sharp and intolerant attitudes which they did during the succeeding age commencing from the seventh century A. D."

N. Subrahmanian, *Saṅgam Polity*, p. 363.

31 *S. I. I.*, Vol. II, part ii, p. 153.

kalā.³² In the light of all these references it is obvious that *Kōchcheṅgaṭ Chōla* came in the line of early *Chōlas*.

Sundarar refers to *Kōchcheṅgaṭ Chōla* Nayanar as *Tennavanāi ulakāṇḍa Cheṅgaṇān* and Tirumaṅgai Ālvār also refers to him in similar terms – *Ulakāṇḍa tennāḍan kuḍa koṅgan Chōlan*. Further Tirumaṅgai Ālvār refers to his successful raid and rule of the northern country and in describing his military prowess he uses such heroic epithets *Kaḷal Mannar*, *Viṇal Mannar* and *Paḍai Mannar*. When could such a tolerant and great temple builder and powerful conqueror and ruler have lived?

In the fourth century A. D. the early Pallavas established their rule at Kāñchi beginning with Sivaskandavarman and Vijayaskandavarman. Vishnugōpa belonged to this line and he continued to rule from Kāñchi till A. D. 350, when he was defeated by Śamudragupta. After this date a period of stress and storm set in and the Vēlūrpālayam plates say that Kumāra Viṣṇu after great efforts recaptured Kāñchi (5th century A. D.).³³ Perhaps in the interval between Viṣṇugōpa and Kumāra Viṣṇu there was a revival of Chōla ascendancy in the Kāñchi region, the author of which was *Kōchcheṅgaṇān*. Tirumaṅgai clearly mentions that *Kōchcheṅgaṇān* conquered the northern country – evidently meaning the Pallava country lying north of the Chōla country.³⁴ This also attests the view regarding the origin of the Pallavas that the Pallava was an intruder in the Tamil land who was probably driven back temporarily due to Chōla occupation and who later re-occupied *Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam*.³⁵

32 *S. I. I.*, Vol. III, part iv.,
Ep. Ind., Vol. XV, p. 46.

33 *E. I.* Vol. III, p. 142.

34 "Tentamiḷan Vaḍapulakkōn".

35 "... on a broad view they (Pallavas) appear ... to have been a dynasty of North Indian origin which moved to the South and there adapted local traditions to their own use". K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India*, p. 97.

The fact that Kōchcheṅgaṇān ruled not only over the Pallava country but also over the Pāṇḍya country is specially mentioned by Sundarar.³⁶ No Chōḷa king could have ruled over the Pāṇḍya country in the first two or three centuries of the Christian era as the Pāṇḍya kings were holding sway over that region according to foreign and Tamil literatures. From the Vēḷvikkūḍi grant we learn that the Kaḷabhras were in occupation of the Pāṇḍya country for about two or three centuries (4th century to 6th century A. D.). Kōchcheṅgaṇān who attempted to revive the Chōḷa power in the north might have succeeded to a certain extent in extending his sway over the Pāṇḍyan country. This must have taken place after the Pāṇḍyan of Talaiyālaṅgānam and just before the establishment of the Kaḷabhra rule. Perhaps he was the Chōḷa king who tried to safeguard the interests of Saivism against the onslaught of the heterodox religions under the Kaḷabhras who were by then making inroads into the Tamil country. Hence his building activity on a large scale.³⁷ From the foregoing discussion it is clear that Kōch-

36 "Tennavanāi ulakāṇḍa Cheṅgaṇān"

"Since Puhār has been washed to some extent by tidal wave, the Chōḷa who had his capital at Puhār had shifted to Uṛaiyūr. Sometime later Cheṅgaṇ ruled not only over Chōḷa but also over Pāṇḍya which latter fact has been specially mentioned by Sundarar. Is this not the reason why Kalidasa mentions in his conquest of Raghu, which he possibly based upon the almost contemporary digvijaya of Samudragupta, only the Pāṇḍya country in the Tamil land? The poet mentions Pāṇḍya next to Kāliṅga completely ignoring the Pallava. What is more curious is Kalidasa mentions Uṛāgapura as the Pāṇḍya capital. Uṛāgapura is Uṛaiyūr as we learn from the Gadwal plates of Vikramāditya I. So Sundarar's praise of Cheṅgaṇ (Kōchcheṅgaṇān) as one who ruled as a Pāṇḍya either by right of conquest or inheritance by marriage is confirmed by various evidences". K. R. Subramanian, "The Origin of Saivism and its history in the Tamil land", *Journal of the Madras University*, Vol. I, Supplement, p. 48.

37. It is likely that Kōchcheṅgaṇān himself or his successors were run over by the Kaḷabhras. Though Kōchcheṅgaṇān is said to have constructed seventy temples

cheṅgaḷ Chōḷa Nayanar must have ruled over the Pāṇḍyas as well as the Pallava country in the later half of the fourth century A. D.

Kūṟṟuva Nayanar is described in the Periyapurāṇam as a king who had conquered his enemies by the might of his arm and in due course became strong enough to take possession of many places belonging to the Chōḷas and Pāṇḍyas. It is said in the Periyapurāṇam that Kūṟṟuva Nayanar gradually attained prominence and wanted to be crowned ruler of the whole of the Chōḷa kingdom by the Brahmins at Tillai. The Brahmins refused to crown him and in fear of persecution left Tillai and took refuge under the Chēra king.³⁸ This Kūṟṟuva Nayanar is considered to be none other than the *Kaliarasan* of the Kaḷabhra family referred to in the Vēlvikkūḍi grant.³⁹ Nambi Āṇḍār Nambī refers to Kūṟṟuva Nayanar as *Kaḷappāḷan* who subdued all the lands under one sceptre.⁴⁰ This reference has led scholars to trace the origin of the Kaḷabhras to the *Kaḷappāḷar* dynasty.

The Kaḷabhras were staunch supporters of alien faiths like Jainism and Buddhism. It is likely that Kūṟṟuva Nayanar also belonged to one of the faiths but at the same time got himself crowned at the Śiva temple at Tillai. This he did perhaps to win the support of the conquered people. This also reveals the fact that in those days there was little animosity among the different religions and the sectarian rivalry began to show its ugly head only from the 7th century onwards.

of a special model on high terraces, only six of them are extant now. Other temples may have been destroyed by the Kaḷabhras who patronised the non-Hindu creeds like Jainism and Buddhism.

38 3932 - 33.

39 M. Raghava Aiyangar, "The Kaḷabhras in South India", *JHI*, Vol. 8, 1929, p.75.

K. R. Venkataraman, "A note on the Kaḷabhras". *Transactions of the Archaeological Society of South India*, 1956-57, pp. 99 - 100.

40 *Tiruttoṇḍar Tiru Andādi*, v. 47.

Sekkilar clearly mentions in the Mūrti Nayanar Puranam the invasion of the Pāṇḍya country by a certain king belonging to an alien dynasty and the establishment of his sway over Madurai. Sekkilar names the alien dynasty as *Vaḍuka-Karunāḍar*.⁴¹ The *Vaḍuka-Karunāḍar* were none other than the Kaḷabhraas who occupied Madurai. The Vēlvikkuḍi grant says that the Kaḷabhraas invaded the Pāṇḍya country, defeated the Pāṇḍya ruler and occupied Madurai and this epigraphical evidence receives corroboration from the Periyapuranam. In history we do not know of any other occupation of Madurai than that of the Kaḷabhraas and therefore the Karnāṭaka occupation of Madurai referred to in the Periyapuranam is considered to be the same as the Kaḷabhra occupation of Madurai described in the Vēlvikkuḍi grant. More interesting is the information furnished by the Periyapuranam that the Karnāṭakas who occupied Madurai were hostile to the orthodox religions and as soon as they commenced their rule they disregarded the worship of Brahmanic Gods, adopted a policy of persecution of the Hindu sects and gave active support to the non-Hindu religions like Jainism and Buddhism. The Kaḷabhra king who ruled during the time of Mūrti Nayanar had leanings towards Jainism and prevented the Nayanar from doing his rituals to the Lord at Ālavāi.⁴² The same information is also furnished in the Tamil work *Kallāḍam* and it says that the Karnāṭaka king who occupied Madurai became a Jaina and persecuted Śaivism.⁴³ Thus it is evident from the facts mentioned above that the Kaḷabhra rulers of Madurai were staunch supporters of the heterodox religions Jainism and Buddhism.

Pugaḷ Chōḷa Nayanar was a Chōḷa king who ruled with Uṟaiyūr as his capital. He held Karuvūr in subjection and conquered Adigan, the chieftain of Tagaḍūr. He may have been one of the few Chōḷas who lived after the

41 978.

42 980-984.

43 *Kallāḍam*, verse 55, 11. 12-14.

Saṅgam period and before the end of the Kaḷabhras inter-regnum – in a period of “suspended animation”.⁴⁴ Eṇipatta Nayanar was the contemporary of Puḡaḷ Chōḷa Nayanar.⁴⁵ So these two Nayanmars must have lived between the 4th century and 6th century A.D.

Aiyaḍiḡaḷ Kāḍavarkōṇ Nayanar was a great scholar in Tamil as well as in Sanskrit. From the term Kāḍavarkōṇ we infer that he was a Pallava king. After renouncing the throne in favour of his son he went on pilgrimage to many shrines of Śiva in the Tamil country.⁴⁶ The Nayanar is referred to in the Sanskrit Purāṇas as *Simhāṅka*, *Pāḍasimha* and *Panchapāḍasimha* and the Nayanar’s son is mentioned as Bhimavarman.⁴⁷ In the genealogical list of the Pallava Kings, Simhavarman III is mentioned as the father of Bhimavarman and Simhavishṇu (A. D. 575 - 615). Therefore scholars identify Aiyāḍiḡaḷ Kāḍavarkōṇ Nayanar with the Pallava king Simhavarman III, (A. D. 550 - 575).⁴⁸

Naminandi Aḍiḡaḷ Nayanar is mentioned in the *Tēvāram* and Daṇḍi Aḍiḡaḷ Nayanar was his contemporary.⁴⁹ Both had encounters with the Jains at Tiruvārūr. So it is evident that the conflicts between the Jains and Śaivas must “have been matters of daily occurrence before the days of Appar and Sambandar”, the period when these two Nayanmars lived.⁵⁰

Appar has mentioned Śakkiya Nayanar in his *Tēvāram*. Śakkiya Nayanar went to Kāñchipuram, and became a devoted student of Buddhist theology but in the end embraced Śaivism.⁵¹ This shows that he must have lived

44 K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Chōḷas*, pp. 105-107.

45 561, 3956.

46 4049.

47 M. Rajamanickam, *Periyapurāṇa Ārāichchi*, pp. 95-96.

48 *Mysore Annual Archaeological Report*, 1925, p. 9-12.

49 1883. Sambandar *Tēvāram* 62-6

Appar *Tēvāram* 102 - 2, 4, 6; 246-4; 254-5.

50 C. V. Narayana Ayyar, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

51 Buddhist are noted in Tamil literature by the word *Śakkiyār*. Appar *Tēvāram* 49-6; 265-8.

in the pre-Appar-Sambandar epoch when Buddhism was popular in Kāñchipuram.

Tirumūlar also must have lived long before Appar and Sambandar because there were a number of temples with āgamic worship in the days of Sambandar and according to the Periyapurānam, Tirumūlar was the first to render the truths of the Āgamas in Tamil.⁵²

Sanḍēsura Nayanar and Kaṇṇappa Nayanar are frequently referred to in the *Tēvāram* by Sambandar and Appar. Kāraikkāl Ammaiṃyār was another very old saint. Sambandar would not set his foot in Tiruvālaṅkāḍu made sacred by her. Appar has commemorated the deep devotion of Gaṇampulla Nayanar. Amarnīti Nayanar and Arivāṭṭāya Nayanar in his hymns. Sambandar has sung in praise of Puḡaḷthuṇai Nayanar and also of Amarnīti Nayanar in his *Tēvāram*.⁵³

CONTEMPORARIES OF APPAR AND SAMBANDAR-11

From a study of the lives of Appar and Sambandar in the Periyapurānam and of the *Tēvāram* we come to know that nine Nayanmars were their contemporaries. They are as follows:

- 52 K. R. Subramania Ayyar, The age of the Nayanmars—reprinted from the *Maharajah's College Magazine*; Vizianagaram, Vol. IV, Nos. 3, 4; pp. 96–104.
- 53 Sanḍēsura Nayanar—Appar 48–4; 49–3; 65–6; 73–5; 102–5; 115–4; 183–1; 186–8; 231–10; 247–10; 286–6; 288–9.
Sambandar 48–7; 62–4; 106–5; 179–5; 201–2; 312–7. 324–3; 326–10; 373–5.
Kaṇṇappa Nayanar—Appar 49–7; 65–8; 225–6; 241–11; 252–9; 294–6; 300–1; 309–1.
Sambandar 293–7; 327–4; 367–7; 374–7.
Gaṇampulla Nayanar—Appar 44–9; 225–7.
Amarnīti Nayanar—Appar 97–. Sambandar 379–1,
Arivāṭṭāya Nayanar—Appar. 102–5.
Puḡaḷthuṇai Nayanar—Sambandar 119–7.
Kāraikkāl Ammaiṃyār—Appar 95–4.

1. Śiṟuttoṇḍa Nayanar
2. Kuṅgiliyakkalaya Nayanar
3. Muruga Nayanar
4. Tirunilakaṇḍa Yālpāṇa Nayanar
5. Tirunilanakka Nayanar
6. Appūdiyaḍigaḷ Nayanar
7. Niṇṇa Śir Neḍumāṇa Nayanar
8. Maṅgaiyarkkarasiyār
9. Kulachchirai Nayanar

Appar in the course of his pilgrimage went to Tiṅgaḷūr, met Appūdiyaḍigaḷ Nayanar at his residence and stayed as his guest for some days.⁵⁴ Once Sambandar visited Tiruppugalūr and stayed as the guest of Muruga Nayanar.⁵⁵ At the same time Appar also visited Tiruppugalūr and along with Sambandar stayed there for some time. Tirunilanakka Nayanar and Śiṟuttoṇḍa Nayanar also came to Tiruppugalūr to pay respects to Appar and Sambandar.⁵⁶ When Appar and Sambandar went to Tirukkaḍavūr they stayed at the residence of Kuṅgiliyakkalaya Nayanar.⁵⁷ Sambandar went to the Pāṇḍya capital Madurai, on the invitation extended by the Pāṇḍya queen Maṅgaiyarkkarasiyār and the minister Kulachchirai Nayanar, to revive Saivism in their country.⁵⁸

Saint Sudaramurti, popularly known as Sundarar, first gave the list of the sixty-three Nayanmars in the *Tiruttoṇḍat-togai*. Therefore his date marks the lower limit for the Periyapuranam Nayanmars. Sundarar was 'a contemporary of a certain king known as Kaḷaṟsiṅgan, who is included in the list of the sixty-three Nayanmars. Sundarar describes him as *Kaḍalsūḷṇḍa ulakelām kakkinṇa perumān Kāḍavarkōn Kaḷaṟsiṅgan*—meaning 'the Kāḍava king with the *Kaḷal* (anklet), who protects the entire world surrounded by the sea'. The fact that he is called 'Kāḍavarkōn' leads us to

54 1465 – 1476.

55 1496, 1508, 1511, 2387–89, 3051, 3148

56 1507, 1511, 2358, 2360, 3051, 3137, 3148, 2366–69.

57 1512, 2431, 2433, 2434.

58 1549, 1665, 1670, 2504 – 2793.

infer that he was a Pallava king. The term 'Kāḍavar' or its related forms of epithets such as 'Kāḍuvetti', and 'Kāḍavar' were bestowed on the Pallava rulers by the Tamil feudatories and their Tamil subjects.⁵⁹ Scholars identify this Pallava king with Nandivarman III (A. D. c. 826-849) and the arguments in favour of this identification may be examined in the light of Sundarar's remarks in his *Tiruttonḍattogai* and Sekkilar's account in the *Periyapurānam*.

The name 'Kaḷarśiṅgan' referred to by Sundarar in his *Tiruttonḍattogai* as well as by Sekkilar in his *Periyapurānam* is also found in the *Nandikkalambakam*, a contemporary work which extols the greatness of Nandivarman III. He is referred to as *Aṛaikaḷal muḍitta Avani Nāraṇan*,⁶⁰ *Kuṛai kaḷal viṇal Nandi*⁶¹ and *Pallava kōḷari* (*kōḷari* = lion, the Tamil equivalent being 'śiṅgan').⁶² Thus the name Kaḷal Siṅgan noticed in the *Tiruttonḍattogai* and in the *Periyapurānam* is identical with the phrase in the *Nandikkalambakam*.

Sundarar pays tribute to Kaḷarśiṅgan as a great devotee of Siva and *Nandikkalambakam* also speaks of Kaḷarśiṅgan as "one whose mind is always concentrated on 'Siva'".⁶³

Eventhough there is no direct evidence to prove that Nandivarman III extended his sway beyond the seas by conquest, there are clear indications of the existence of the economic relations of South India with the outside world in the 9th century A. D. The *Nandikkalambakam*, states that Nandi had an organised navy under him.⁶⁴ From the inscriptions of his period it is clear that he encouraged external trade. The overseas contacts of this period are

59 C. Minakshi, *Administration and Social life under the Pallavas*, pp. 17-18.

60 v. 66, l. 2.

61 v. 28, l. 4.

62 v. 59, l. 3.

63 v. 96, l. 1. "Sivanai muḷudu maṇavāda sindaiyān"

64 v. 5, ll. 2-3, v. 18, l. 1.

further attested by an inscription in Siam which mentions a tank called Avani Nāraṇam, evidently named after Nandivarman III.⁶⁵

Sekkilar states in the Periyapurāṇam that Kaḷaḷa Siṅgaṇ was a Pallava king who distinguished himself by invading the northern regions and defeating the kings of the North.⁶⁶ The *Nandikkalambakam* also furnishes the information that besides the Chēra, Chōḷa and Pāṇḍya kings, the kings of the North also paid tribute to the Pallava king Nandivarman.⁶⁷ On the basis of epigraphical evidence Nandivarman's encounters with and the defeat of northern rulers have become an established fact. In the light of these data it is evident that Kaḷaḷa Siṅgaṇ of Sundarar's time was none other than Nandivarman III.⁶⁸

The contemporaneity of Chēramān Perumāḷ Nayanar, the only Chēra king referred to in the Periyapurāṇam, with Sundarar also helps to assign Sundarar to the period of Nandivarman III. According to scholars Chēramān Peru-

65 C. Minakshi, *op.cit.*, p. 300.

66 4097.

67 v. 27, 11. 5-6.

68 It is worthy of note that an episode referred to in the Periyapurāṇam also lends support to this identification. Kaḷaḷa Siṅgaṇ was a pious devotee of Śiva and he visited many temples in the south along with his queen. In the temple at Tiruvārūr when rituals were taking place, the king was inside the temple, probably at the Sanctum Sanctorum but the queen was seen in the *prākāra* of the temple. A saint by name Seruttuṇaiyār was making garlands for Lord Śiva at a particular place in the *prākāra* of the temple. The queen went there, took a flower which was lying nearby the saint and smelt it. At once the saint got angry and cut off the nose of the queen for smelling the flower which was intended for the Lord thereby polluting it. Scholars are of the view that it must be Saṅka, the queen of Nandivarman III. She was a Rāshṭrakūṭa princess, second daughter of Amōgavarsha Nripatuṅga and a pious Jain, and that may be the reason for her indifferent behaviour in the Śiva Temple.

M. Rajamanickam, *Periyapurāṇa Āraichchi*, pp.55-57.

mal's death marks the beginning of the Kollam era, which according to the Malayalam calender begins in 825 A.D. But there are others who trace the origin of the Kollam era to a different incident.⁶⁹

CONTEMPORARIES OF SUNDARAR—13

The following twelve of the sixty- three Nayanmars were the contemporaries of Sundarar :-

1. Saḍaiyanār
2. Isaiñāniyār
3. Narasiṅga Munaiyaraiya Nayanar
4. Kaḷarṣiṅga Nayanar
5. Chēramān Perumaḷ Nayanar
6. Seruttuṇai Nayanar
7. Viṇamṇḍa Nayanar
8. Ēyarkōṅkalikkāma Nayanar
9. Mānakkañjāra Nayanar
10. Perumiḷalaikkurumba Nayanar
11. Kōtpuli Nayanar
12. Sōmāsīmāra Nayanar.

Saḍaiyanār and Isaiñāniyār were the father and mother of Sundarar respectively, and both are included in the list of the Nayanmars.⁷⁰ Narasiṅga Munaiyaraiya Nayanar, the chieftain of Tirumunaippāḍi Nāḍu, adopted Sundarar and brought him up in his palace.⁷¹ In discussing the date of Sundarar it is to be remembered that Kaḷarṣiṅga Nayanar, the Pallava king, was the contemporary of Sundarar and so also the Chēra king Chēramān Perumaḷ Nayanar.⁷² Seruttuṇai Nayanar punished the consort of Kaḷarṣiṅga Nayanar when she polluted the flower meant for the Lord at Tiruvārūr temple.⁷³ It was Viṇamṇḍa

69 K. K. Pillay, "The Kollam Era", *Professor P Sundaram Pillai Commemoration Volume*, p. 73.

70 149, 4227-28.

71 151, 3983.

72 3792, 3811-3910, 4096, 4123, 4231-77.

73 4101 - 4106, 4123 - 4126.

Nayanar, who remonstrated against Sundarar at Tiruvārūr temple when the latter ignored the Śiva devotees present in the Dēvāsiriyan *maṇḍapa* and went away without paying respects to them.⁷⁴ When Sundarar realised his mistake, he came back and apologised before the devotees and sang the *Tiruttoṇḍattogai* at the command of the Lord Śiva. Similarly Ēyarkōṅkalikkāma Nayanar remonstrated against Sundarar for having sent the Lord Himself as mediator when Sundarar had some mis-understanding with his wife Paravaiyār.⁷⁵ Ēyarkōṅkalikkāma Nayanar was married to the daughter of Mānakkāṇjāra Nayanar.⁷⁶ Perumīlalaik-kurumba Nayanar was another contemporary of Sundarar who took to the worship of Sundarar himself as his cherished Lord.⁷⁷ Sōmāsīmāra Nayanar also took to the worship of Sundarar himself and spent his life at Tiruvārūr.⁷⁸ Kōṭṭpuli Nayanar invited Sundarar to his place and had the honour of entertaining him.⁷⁹

NAYANMARS IN THE INTERVAL BETWEEN APPAR - SAMBANDAR EPOCH AND SUNDARAR - 22.

Still there are twenty-two Nayanmars of whose dates we know little. They must have definitely preceded Sundarar. It may not be correct to assign them a date prior to Appar - Sambandar epoch for there are no references to these Nayanmars either in the hymns of Appar as well as Sambandar or in any Literature or inscriptions belonging to the period before Appar and Sambandar. Therefore they are tentatively assigned to the period between Appar-Sambandar epoch and that of Sundarar. They are the following :

74 497, 499, 501, 336, 342, 349.

75 3537-62, 3162.

76 881, 883, 885, 899-901.

77 1709-10, 1712-15.

78 3632-34

79 3185, 3187-96.

1. Pūsalār Nayanar
2. Kāri Nayanar
3. Adipatta Nayanar
4. Kalikkamba Nayanar
5. Kaliya Nayanar
6. Satti Nayanar
7. Vayilār Nayanar
8. Munaiyaḍuvār Nayanar
9. Iḍaṅgaḷi Nayanar
10. Iyaṟpagai Nayanar
11. Nēsa Nayanar
12. Iḷaiyānguḍi Maṟā Nayanar
13. Meypporuḷ Nayanar
14. Tirunaḷaippōvār Nayanar
15. Ēnādi Nayanar
16. Ānāya Nayanar
17. Rudrapasupati Nayanar
18. Tirukkuṟipputtonḍa Nayanar
19. Mūrka Nayanar
20. Siṟappuli Nayanar
21. Gaṇanāta Nayanar
22. Tirunilakaṇṭa Nayanar

We are in a position to establish the historical identity of two of the above listed Nayanmars – namely Pūsalār Nayanar and Meypporuḷ Nayanar. In the Pūsalār Nayanār Purāṇam, Sekkilar mentions that a Pallava king built a temple dedicated to Śiva and heard a celestial voice directing the postponement of the consecration by a day as He had to be present on the same day at the temple built by Pūsalār Nayanar for a similar function. Scholars identify the Pallava king with Rājasimha (alias Narasimhavarman II A. D. 680 – 720) on the basis of an inscription found at the Kailāsanātha temple at Kāñchipuram where it is mentioned that Rājasimha heard a celestial voice.⁸⁰

Meypporuḷ Nayanar, who was also known as Milāḍuḍaiyār, was one of the chieftains referred to in the Periya-

⁸⁰ R. Gopalan, *Pallavas of Kāñchi*, p. 109.
S. I. I., Vol. I, No. 24, v. 7.

puranam ruling from Tirukkōvalūr. We may identify this chieftain as one belonging to the Malaiyar family – a minor family of subordinate rulers who flourished from the *Saṅgam* days till the days of Kulōttuṅga III at Tirukkōvalūr in Malai Nāḍu.⁸¹

In the case of the following nine groups of Nayanmars the necessity of assigning them to definite dates does not arise because the groups are not composed of men with definite names and on the other hand each group is named after certain common qualities of devotees :

1. Tillaivaḷandaṇar
2. Poyyaḍimaiyillādapulavar
3. Pattarāiyppanivār
4. Paramanaiyēpāḍuvār
5. Sittattaiśivanpālē-vaittār
6. Tiruvārūr-piṇḍār
7. Muppōdum-tirumēni-tiṇḍuvār
8. Muḷuniṇṇupūsiya-munivar
9. Appālum-aḍichchārndār

Tillaivaḷandaṇar are those devotees living at Tillai; Poyyaḍimaiyillādapulavār are those poet-saints of “no false devotion”; Pattarāiyppanivār are those worshippers of other devotees; Paramanaiyēpāḍuvār are those singing the glory of God; Sittattai-śivanpālē-vaittār are those who have fixed their mind on the Lord Śiva; Tiruvārūrppiṇḍār are those born at Tiruvārūr; Muppōdum-tirumēni-tiṇḍuvār are those who touch the Holy idol in the temple and perform rituals thrice a day; Muḷuniṇṇupūsiyamunivar are the sages who smear themselves completely with holy ashes and Appālum-aḍichchārndār are the devotees who were yet to come.

The object of Sundara in mentioning these devotees in groups was perhaps to avoid omission of any devotee

81 N. Subrahmanian, ‘The Malaiyar’, *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. XLIV, part I, April 1966, pp. 205–211. An inscription of the time of Rājendra Chōla I (1012–44) refers to the installation of a copper image of Meypporuḷ Nayanar in the Brihadiśvara temple at Tanjavūr. 222 of 1911, *S. I. I.*, Vol. II, No. 40.

from the canon, who might have attained beatitude before his time or those who might attain such bliss after his time. So it is not possible to assign them to any particular date.

Form the foregoing discussion we may conclude that the upper limit of the time of the Nayanmars may be fixed as the 9th century A. D. when Sundarar listed them in his *Tiruttonḍattogai*. To the *Tiruttonḍattogai* was not added further names of devotees and there are definitely no interpolations. The lower limit may be fixed as the 4th century A. D. – in other words the period following the third *San̄gam*. Therefore by the term “age of the Nayanmars” we mean the period between 4th and 9th centuries A. D.

3 Kingship and Administration

The Periyapurāṇam is one of the masterpieces in Tamil literature and it contains many authentic facts supported by history. The Periyapurāṇam speaks of the lives of the pious devotees of Śiva among whom many were kings, chieftains, commanders-in-chief and one was a minister. There is abundant information regarding the political condition, the kings and the system of government that existed in the Tamil country, in the age of the Nayanmars. In this chapter an attempt is made to give an account of the kings mentioned in the Periyapurāṇam and to study the system of administration that prevailed in the Tamil country.

CHOLAS

There are two Chōḷa kings in the list of the sixty-three Nayanmars who attained bliss by pious acts of devotion. Sekkilar provides a detailed account of the two Chōḷa kings – Kōchcheṅgaṭ-Chōḷa Nayanar¹ and Pugaḷ-Chōḷa Nayanar² in the Periyapurāṇam.³

Kōchcheṅgaṭ-Chōḷa Nayanar is also known as Kōchcheṅgaṇān who earned his fame as a great builder of temples. He was born of the Chōḷa King Subadēvan and Queen Kamalavadi.⁴ Almost all the literary works that

1 4197-4214.

2 3942-3982.

3 For the historicity and identification of Kōchcheṅgaṭ Chōḷa vide. chapter "*The Age of the Nayanmars*".

4 4203. It is difficult to trace the historicity of these royal parents from the genealogy of the early Chōḷa kings.

speak of Kōchcheṅgaṇan mention his mythological ancestry.⁵ It is widely accepted that Kōchcheṅgaṇan must have lived anterior to the days of Sambandar and Appar, for they mention him in many places in their *Tēvāram* hymns. Scholars assign him to the latter half of the 5th century A. D.⁶

Kōchcheṅgaṇan is said to have constructed the temple at Tiruvānaikka to commemorate the events that took place in his previous birth.⁷ He also constructed numerous temples all over the Chōḷa country through the supervision of his ministers and provided endowments for the services and upkeep of the temples.⁸ He built living apartments for the temple priests at Chidambaram,⁹ and spent his days

- 5 4198-4202. He is said to have existed as a spider in his previous birth. " ... a spider devoted itself to the service of Śiva at Tiruvānaikka by weaving its web over the Liṅga every day to prevent leaves dropping on the image. Every morning, at the same time, a white elephant (4198) used to come for performing worship. The elephant used to sweep off the cob-web, pour over the Liṅga water that it had brought in its trunk, and offer a few flowers similarly brought with it. Wearied by this act of wanton destruction of his own efforts, the spider managed to get into the trunk of the elephant and worried him so much that unable any longer to bear the pain, the elephant struck its trunk against the earth violently and died, the spider also died in its pious efforts to destroy the elephant which so regularly and wantonly molested him in his act of worship. For this act of devotion the spider was ordained by the grace of Śiva to be born a Chōḷa prince."

S Krishnaswami Aiyangar, *Some contributions of Southern India to Indian Culture*, p. 217.

- 6 R. Gopalan, *Pallavas of Kāñchi*, p. 30. The grounds on which this writer assigns him to the 5th century A. D. are convincing.
- 7 4209.
- 8 4210-4211. Tirumaṅgai Āḷvār tells that Kōchcheṅgaṇan built seventy temples which were specially designed to rest on high platforms, known as 'Māḍakkōil'. *Periya Tirumōḷi* - VI. 6. For details *vide infra*, ch. 8.
- 9 4212.

in worshipping Lord Naṭarāja till he attained bliss under His Grace.

Another Chōḷa king included in the list of the Nayanmars is Pugaḷ Chōḷar. Uṟaiyūr was his capital and he held Karuvūr in subjection.¹⁰ The Periyapurānam states that at the time of Pugaḷ Chōḷa's royal visit to Karuvūr many chieftains from the Koṅgu country and from the Western ghats waited upon him and paid him tributes.¹¹ He is believed to have lived either in the 5th or 6th century A. D.¹²

We have reference to six other Chōḷa kings in the Periyapurānam. Sekkilar mentions his patron and king Anapāya in many places. This king Anapāya has been identified by scholars with Kulōttuṅga II.¹³ In the chapter titled 'Tirunagarachchirappu', Sekkilar speaks of the glorious city of Tiruvārūr. Therein he narrates in detail the justice meted out by Manu Nidi Chōḷa, to the cow whose calf was run over and killed by the chariot driven by the King's son.¹⁴ From his name Manu Nidi Chōḷa we infer that he was one who dispensed justice according to the tenets of *Manu Dharma Śāstra*.¹⁵ The earliest reference to this king is found in the *Silappadikāram*, a Tamil work assigned by scholars to 2nd century A. D.¹⁶ Reference is made in

10 3942, 3952.

11 3952.

12 For details of date discussion *vide supra*. pp. 39-40.

13 For discussion on the identification *vide supra*. pp. 7-9.

14 98-135. It is interesting to note that the whole story is recorded in an inscription in the Tiruvārūr temple of the time of Vikrama Chōḷa (A.D. 1118-1135). This shows that the legend must have been popular in the country. Sekkilar who lived in the time of Kulōttuṅga II (A. D. 1135-1150), son and successor of Vikrama Chōḷa, might have noted this inscription in composing his verses.

15 This shows the Āryan influence over the Tamil Polity and it is widely believed such an influence had its beginning in the early centuries of the Christian era.

16 V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar, *Studies in Tamil literature and history*, pp. 70-77.

the Periyapurānam to four other Chōḷa kings whose names are not mentioned; their identification is also difficult owing to the paucity of evidence. Mention is made of a Chōḷa king ruling from Tiruvārūr, who came personally and settled the dispute between a devotee of Śiva named Daṇḍi Aḍigaḷ and a group of Jains.¹⁷ Since Sambandar refers to Daṇḍi Aḍigaḷ in his *Tēvāram* we may assign this king to a date prior to the 7th century A. D. Similarly mention is made of another Chōḷa king who drove out the Jains from the precincts of the Śiva temple at Paḷayārai when Appar visited the shrine in the course of his pilgrimage.¹⁸ This Chōḷa king being the contemporary of Appar must have lived in the 7th century A. D. It is said that the Pāṇḍya king Niṇṇa Sir Nedumāraṇ was wedded to Maṅgarkkarasi, the daughter of a certain Chōḷa king.¹⁹ This Chōḷa king who may be placed in the 7th century must have occupied a lesser place in those days, for he and his successors "are not prominently mentioned anywhere in the records of this age, but they appear to have continued in obscurity somewhere in their original territory on the banks of the Kāviri and it is likely they sought or were forced into matrimonial connections with the rising house of the Pāṇḍyas."²⁰ When Sundarar visited the Pāṇḍyan king at his capital city Madurai, accompanied by the Chēra king Chēramān Perumaḷ, a Chōḷa king who was the son-in-law of the Pāṇḍyan king is also said to have been present, thereby making it a meeting of the three kings – Chēra, Chōḷa and Pāṇḍya.²¹ Sundarar is believed to have lived during the reign of Nandivarman III.²² So it is probable that the Chōḷa king who was a contemporary of Nandi-

S. Kṛishnaswami Aiyangar, *Maṇimēkalai in its Historical setting*, pp 4-12.

17 3604-3616.

18 1559-1565.

19 4189. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, p. 105.

20 K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Pāṇḍyan Kingdom*, p. 54.

21 3844, 3846, 3847, 3852.

22 For details of identification *vide supra*. pp. 42-44.

varman must have belonged to the line which preceded Vijayālaya.

PANDYAS

There are two canonised Nayanmars belonging to the Pāṇḍya line – Ninṛa Sir Neḍumāraṇ and his queen Maṅgayarkkarasi. Sekkilar narrates in detail the victorious 'Nelvēli' battle of this Pāṇḍya king.²³ This king has been identified by scholars with Arikēsari Māṇavarman.²⁴ This Pāṇḍya king, according to the Periyapurāṇam was first a staunch Jain but was later converted to the Śaiva creed by Sambandar.²⁵ It may be said that in his reign the influence of the Jains in the Tamil country received a great blow which paved the way for a continued set-back in the following years.

In the Periyapurāṇam we hear of another Pāṇḍya king who received Sundarar and Chēramāṇ Perumāḷ when they visited the Pāṇḍya capital Madurai.²⁶ Scholars have identified this Pāṇḍya king with Varaguṇa Mahārāja who is also known as Jāṭila Parāntaka Neḍuñjaḍayan.²⁷

CHERA

The only Chēra king of whom we hear of is Chēramāṇ Perumāḷ, a contemporary of Sundarar. Chēramāṇ Perumāḷ was a devoted friend of Sundarar and is said to have reached the sacred mountain of Kailās in his company.²⁸ He is believed to have lived in the 9th century A. D.²⁹

PALLAVAS

There are two Pallava kings in the list of the sixty-three Nayanmars, namely Aiyāḍiḷaḷ Kāḍavarkōṇ and Kaḷarṣiṅgaṇ.

23 4071–4076,

24 For details of identification *vide supra*. p. 33

25 For details of conversion *vide infra*. ch. 6.

26 3842.

27 K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Pāṇḍyan kingdom*, p. 60.

28 4274.

29 For details of date discussion *vide supra*. pp. 44–45.

Aiyaḍigaḷ Kāḍavarkōn ruled from Kāñchipuram. After many years of pious, just and peaceful reign he renounced the earthly crown in favour of his son and spent the rest of his life in pilgrimage.³⁰ He has been identified with the Pallava king Simhavarman III who is placed in the middle of the 6th century A. D.³¹

The other Pallava king Kaḷaṟsiṅgan is said to have lived during the time of Sundarar. Sekkilar hails him as a great conqueror and as a pious devotee of Śiva.³² He is identified with the Pallava king Nandivarman III.³³

There are indirect references to three other Pallava kings in the Periyapuranam. It is only from the Periyapuranam that we get a detailed account of the conversion of the Pallava king Mahēndravarman I from Jainism to Śaivism. Siṟuttoṇḍa Nayanar is said to have led the Pallava forces when they attacked and destroyed Vātapi the Chāḷukyan capital. The Pallava king of his time has been identified as Paramesvaravarman I.³⁴ In the life of Pūsalār Nayanar we come across a Pallava king who built a temple at Kāñchipuram. This king postponed the day of the consecration of the temple built by him in order to facilitate Pūsalār Nayanar to have the consecration ceremony for the temple enshrined in his heart. This Pallava king has been identified as Narasimhavarman II.³⁵

KALABHRAS

The Kaḷabhra rule is believed to have existed in the Tamil country in the 4th, 5th and 6th centuries A. D.³⁶ The Periyapuranam mentions a Kaḷabhra king, Kūṟruva Nayanar who conquered and subdued many kings and asked the Brahmin priests at Tillai who were alone eligible

30 4047, 4049, 4052.

31 *Vide supra*. p. 40.

32 4096, 4098

33 *Vide supra* pp. 43-44.

34 *Vide supra*, pp. 32-33.

35 4179, *Vide supra*, p. 47.

36 *Vide supra*, pp. 37-39.

to crown the Chōla kings, to perform his coronation ceremony. But the priests refused and Kūṟṟuva Nayanar appealed to Lord Naṭarāja to crown him and spent his life thereafter in worship.³⁷ This Kūṟṟuva Nayanar is considered to be none other than the 'Kaliarasan' of the Kaḷabhra family referred to in the Vēlvikkūḍi grant, which does not stand for a proper name in that context on the ground that 'Kūṟṟuvan' simply connotes the same idea as Kaliarasan.³⁸

While narrating the life of Mūrti Nayanar, Sekkilar mentions a certain Kaḷabhra king having deliberately deprived the Nayanar of the means of preparing sandal paste for the anointment of the God at Madurai.³⁹ From this it is evident that Madurai was under Kaḷabhra occupation which lasted for a fairly long time until it was terminated by Kaḍuṅḡon.

CHIEFTAINS

There are references to four Nayanmars as chieftains of different regions in the Periyapurānam. Meypporūl Nayanar is said to have ruled Sēdi Nāḍu from the capital city Tirukkōvalūr.⁴⁰ Sēdi Nāḍu or Malāḍu is the mountainous region around Tirukkōvalūr in the modern South Arcot district. Narasiṅga Munaiyaraiya Nayanar, a Pallava chieftain of the family of 'Munaiyar ruled the territory of Tirumunaippāḍi Nāḍu. This is situated near Sēdi Nāḍu.⁴¹ We hear of a chieftain from the Chōla country by name Perumiḷalaikkurumba Nayanar. He ruled over the petty kingdom of Perumiḷalai, coming in the dynasty or 'Kurumbar.'⁴² Another chieftain referred

37 3932.

38 M. Raghava Aiyangar, "The Kaḷabhras in South India", *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. VIII, 1929, pp. 77-78.

39 984.

40 467.

41 3983. He was the God-father of Sundarar and brought up Sundarar in his palace.

42 1701, 1706.

to in the Periyapuranam is Iḍaṅgaḷi Nayanar. He belonged to the dynasty of 'Irukkuvēḷir' and ruled Kōṇāḍu from the capital city of Kodumbāḷūr, situated in the present Triuchchirāppaḷḷi district.⁴³

We also hear of a chieftain Kollimaḷavan of Kollimalai in the present Tiruchchirāppaḷḷi district, seeking the blessings of Sambandar⁴⁴ and another chieftain by name Adihan of Tagaḍūr, modern Dharmapuri, who was admonished by Pugaḷ Chōḷa for not paying tributes.⁴⁵

COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF

Siṟuttoṇḍa Nayanar is one of the four commanders-in-chief whom we come across in the Periyapuranam. He is also known as Parañjōti.⁴⁶ He was the commander-in-chief of the Pallava king Paramēsvaravarman I who distinguished himself in the battles with the Chāḷukyas. He was a contemporary of Sambandar. Mānakkāñjāra Nayanar is another commander-in-chief hailing from a place known as Kañjāḷūr in the Chōḷa country.⁴⁷ He gave his daughter in marriage to another military chief by name Ēyarkōn Kalikkāma-Nayanar of Tirupperumaṅgalam.⁴⁸ Ēyarkōn Kalikkāmar was a contemporary of Sundarar and thus we may place these two military chiefs in the 9th century – the period of Sundarar. Another Nayanar-military chief of

43 4110, 4111,

44 2209.

45 3958. The chieftain Adihan of Tagaḍūr belongs to the dynasty of Adihans and their history can be traced to the days of *Sanḡam*.

M. Arokiaswami, "Adigaman of Tagaḍūr – His origin" *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. XXII, part III, No.96, Dec. 1954, pp. 229–232.

N. Subrahmanian, "The Adiyār" *Journal of Madras University*, Nos. 1 & 2, (Section A-Humanities), July 1963 & Jan. 1964, pp. 17–23.

46 3661.

47 872, 886.

48 3159.

Sundarar's time is Kōṭpuli Nayanar of Tirunāṭṭiyattāṅkuḍi in the Chōḷa country.⁴⁹

MINISTERS

One of the sixty-three Nayanmars was the Prime Minister in the Pāṇḍya kingdom. Kulachchirai Nayanar was the Prime Minister to the Pāṇḍya king Ninra Sir Neḍumāraṇ. He played a significant role along with the Pāṇḍya queen Maṅgayarkkarasi and Sambandar in bringing back the Pāṇḍya king to Saivism from Jainism.⁵⁰ We have also reference to some ministers giving counsel to Manu Nidi Chōḷa.⁵¹

KINGSHIP

The polity of a country reflects the social life of the times and the state of society and the administrative arrangements at that time. The smooth running of government, to a large extent depended upon the attitude of its people. In the days of monarchy in the Tamil country there are evidences to show the benevolence with which the kings ruled the country. There are many references in the Periyapurāṇam to the administrative system that prevailed in the time of the Nayanmars.

The institution of kingship was an ancient one among the Tamils. *Tolkāppiyam*, the earliest Tamil grammar available, records that the duties of a king including learning, sacrificing, giving patronage to poets and scholars, offering protection to the people and punishing evil doers.⁵² The fact that the institution of kingship attained greater importance in the early centuries of the Christian era is attested by the details of polity given in the *Saṅgam* literature like *Tirukkuraḷ* and *Puṇānūru*.⁵³ The importance of a

49 3191, 4134.

50 1702, 1703, 1705.

51 115-128.

52 *Tolkāppiyam*, Poruḷadikāram, 74-2. (Iḷampūraṇam).

53 "The *Tirukkuraḷ*.....gives a fairly good idea of the state in consonance with the prevailing theory of the

king in the body politic is learnt from the Periyapurāṇam which indicates, how a successor was chosen on the death of a king.⁵⁴ The country which has other elements like the land, the subjects and the good army cannot survive unless it is governed by an able ruler. The country without a king is compared to a body without soul.⁵⁵

DUTIES OF THE KING

The king is considered to be the protector of the realm. It is the duty of the king to protect the life of all living beings. The duties of the king may be said to be those of the policeman and the soldier in maintaining peace in the country and in protecting it from foreign aggression and internal dissensions.⁵⁶ "In India religion and social organisation have invariably moved together, and hence the Hindu kings have always thought that the protection of the religion of the people was one of their important functions."⁵⁷ It is said that king Manu Nīdi Chōḷa made provisions, according to the regulations laid down in the *Āgamas*, for the daily rituals to the presiding deity at the Tiruvārūr temple.⁵⁸ As inheritors of an orthodox tradition and as the pious followers of Hinduism the kings of Tamil

time....*Kuṟaḷ* makes king the most important of the seven elements of sovereignty and considers the rest as subordinate to him. This significant observation by the great author of the *Kuṟaḷ* throws much welcome light on contemporary political thought. The king was the main pivot of the administration, and the strength and durability of the government very much depended on his personality. This is also borne out by the evidence of the *Puṛaṇānūṟu*, an anthology of the *Saṅgam* age'.

T. V. Mahalingam, *South Indian Polity*, pp. 12-13.

54 995

55 996.

56 110, 112, 118, 121.

57 T. V. Mahalingam, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

58 101.

country often went on pilgrimages to important shrines and took part in the religious activities conducted in temples.⁵⁹

SUCCESSION :

The principle of patrilineal succession came to be widely followed with regard to kingship. There were some kings who renounced the throne in favour of their sons on account of old age. The Pallava king Aiyadigaḷ Kāḍavarkōṇ, one of the Nayanmars, renounced his crown in favour of his son.⁶⁰ The Chōḷa king Subadēvan, father of the famous king Kōchcheṅgaḷ Chōḷa Nayanar also passed the throne to his son when he became old.⁶¹

There is reference in the Periyapurānam to a strange method of choosing a successor when a king died without a son to succeed him. The choice was made by allowing the royal elephant to go round the country and choose the successor. When the Kaḷabhra king, a contemporary of Mūrti Nayanar died without issues, the ministers decided to accept a successor to be chosen by the royal elephant. The royal elephant was blind-folded and set at large in the streets of Madurai. It came to the outskirts of the temple and lifted Mūrti Nayanar, a man of the merchant community with its trunk and placed him on its back. The ministers paid respects to Mūrti Nayanar and crowned him.⁶²

59 The Pāṇḍya king Ninṇa Sir Neḍumāraṇ, after his conversion to Śaivism from Jainism, went on pilgrimage with Sambandar. 2781-2793. Similarly king Chēraṁan Perumaḷ accompanied Sundarar to many shrines in the Tamil country; some kings like Kōchchēgaṇāṇ built temples to exhibit their religious zeal.

60 4048.

61 4207.

62 994, 997, 998, 1001.

Karikāla Chōḷa belonging to the time of early Chōḷas who preceded the Kaḷabhras, was also chosen likewise to rule the country. It is quite likely that the ministers of the Kaḷabhras who immediately came after the early Chōḷas, adopted the same method in choosing a king.

The fact that the 'Marumakkaṭtiyam' succession took place in the Chēra country according to the conventions which prevailed there, is well illustrated in the Periyapurānam. When the Chēra king Seṅgōṟ Poṟaiyan, the predecessor of Chēramān Perumāḷ Nayanar, renounced the crown, the ministers appealed to Chēramān Perumāḷ to occupy the throne according to the traditions of the country.⁶³

CORONATION

The crowning of kings was an important ceremony when monarchy was the order of the day. It was this ceremony that gave the kings the legal sanction to rule over the country. In connection with the coronation there were elaborate rituals preceding the act of crowning. There are references to two coronation ceremonies in the Periyapurānam. One was that of the crowning of Mūrti Nayanar,⁶⁴ and the other of Chēramān Perumāḷ Nayanar.

The coronation usually took place in the hall of public audience. The king to be crowned was brought to the coronation hall on an elephant in ceremonial royal procession. The hall was decorated with garlands made of precious stones and as well as fresh flowers. The king was seated on the throne overcapped with the royal umbrella and rituals took place in front of him. Sacred fire was lit amidst the chanting of vedas by priests and holy waters were kept in brass pots. The king came round the fire and accepted the crown and assumed the reins of government.⁶⁵ The ceremony was followed by the visit of the crowned king to the temple to receive the blessings of the Almighty God.⁶⁶ There seems to have prevailed among the Chōḷas the custom of holding the coronation ceremony

63 3757-3759.

64 1004-1010.

65 3762-3770.

66 1004, 1005, 1010, 1011, 3767, 3768.

at four other important cities besides the one at the capital.⁶⁷

ABDICATION

Many kings appear to have abdicated the throne in favour of their sons, mostly on account of their old age. They retired from active politics and spent the rest of their lives in pilgrimage and pious meditation. The Pallava king Aiyadigaḷ Kāḍavarkōṇ renounced the crown in favour of his son so that he can serve God. He was a scholar both in Sanskrit and in Tamil and went on pilgrimage to numerous shrines and composed verses commemorating his visit. They are known as *Kshetra-t-tiruveṇbā*.⁶⁸ The Chōḷa king Pugaḷ Chōḷa Nayanar bequeathed the throne to his son before immolating himself for having caused the death of a devotee of Śiva when his forces subdued a chieftain.⁶⁹

CAPITAL CITIES

The capital cities and palaces of the kings were the places where the pomp, splendour and pageantry of the royal courts were displayed. The three Tamil kingdoms seem to have had more than one capital. "In the *San̄gam* age the capitals of the Chōḷas were Uṟaiyūr and Puhār, the capitals of the Pāṇḍyas were Madurai and Koṟkai and the Chēra capitals were Karuvūr and Muziṟi. While one of the two capitals of each of them was the administrative headquarters of the government, the other attained importance as a centre of trade."⁷⁰

Sekkilar gives a detailed description of the Chōḷa capital Uṟaiyūr in connection with his account of the life of Pugaḷ Chōḷa Nayanar. Rows of beautiful houses adorned the streets of the capital city. Transaction in all kinds of things

67 1213. The five prominent cities were Karūr, Uṟaiyūr, Kāvīrippūmpaṭṭinam, Tiruvārūr and Seyñālūr.

68 4048-4049.

69 3978.

70 T.V. Mahalingam, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

took place in the business centres. There was a moat around the city abutting the high walls of the fort.⁷¹

The ancient Chōḷa capital Puhar was the birth place of Iyarpagai Nayanar.⁷² Glories of this city are extolled in the twin epics the *Silappadikāram* and the *Maṇimēkalai*. In the time of the Nayanar Puhar had an insignificant place probably owing to the fact that it was destroyed by a great tidal wave in the second century A. D.⁷³

The Pāṇḍya capital Madurai, the seat of the Tamil Saṅgam, played an important role even during the reign of the Kaḷabhras. This is revealed by Sekkilar's description of the city in *Mūrti Nayanar Puranam*.⁷⁴ It was here that the disputation between Sambandar and the Jains took place in the time of the Pāṇḍya king Ninṛa Śir Neḍumāraṇ.

The Pallava capital Kāñchipuram is vividly described by Sekkilar in *Tirukkuriḍḍiṭṭonḍa Nayanar Puranam*. The city walls had in them imposing gateways and were surrounded by a deep moat. There were long roads humming with business activities. There were constant movements of elephants, horses and chariots in the roads. Royal roads were filled with all kinds of martial activities. There are many references as to how the palace gates and entrances of king's chambers were well guarded.⁷⁵

ROLE OF MINISTERS

The king was the head of the government and was ably assisted by learned and trustworthy ministers. Ministers and other high officials of the State always accompanied the king wherever he went.⁷⁶ When King Puḡaiḥchchōḷa paid a royal visit to Kārūr the ministers appraised the king of the

71 3943, 3944, 3947.

72 404.

73 T.V. Mahalingam, *op. cit.* p.76.

74 968, 974.

75 1163, 1164, 1165.

76 3952. This may include the council of Five and the group of eight officials.

obedience of the chieftains in the payment of tributes.⁷⁷ Kings often consulted the ministers in the day-to-day affairs of the state. When king Manu Nidi Chōḷa heard about the misery of the cow when its calf was run over and killed by the chariot of his son, it is said that he immediately consulted his ministers to seek the way to redress the grievance of the cow.⁷⁸ Ministers played also an important role in the religious affairs of the realm. When the Jains complained to the Pallava king that Appar had gone back to the Saiva fold, the king sent his ministers to bring Appar.⁷⁹ Kulachchirai Nayanar, minister to the Pāṇḍya king Ninṇa Sir Neḍumāran, played a notable role in re-establishing Śaivism in the Pāṇḍya country.

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

The unit of administration of the Tamil kings was the village. The village assembly is referred to in the Periyapurāṇam as 'Avai' or 'Sabhai'.⁸⁰ It comprised men well versed in the Vedas and who met at a fixed place. Of the many and varied functions of these local bodies, administration of justice was the most important one.⁸¹ The Periyapurāṇam contains a detailed account of the way in which judicial business was transacted in the local assembly. Sekkilar narrates the events of the mythical quarrel between Lord Śiva and Sundarar, resulting in the trial in front of the local assembly at Tiruveṇṇainallūr.⁸² Apart from the story, its description gives us an idea of the manner in

77 3955.

78 115-128.

79 1355.

80 197, 390, 1245, 1246.

81 "It is worth noting that almost every inscription in Southern India which mentions a village assembly also makes reference to a madhyastha of the village, and that administration of justice formed one of the principal duties of the assembly".

K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Studies of the Chōḷa History and Administration*, p. 77.

82 The whole trial is described from stanza 174 to 211.

which the local assembly conducted its judicial business. The story runs as follows: At the time of the marriage of Sundarar, Lord Śiva in the guise of a Brahman bent double with age and a furrowed face appeared at the marriage ceremony and claimed that Sundarar was his bond-slave. This claim was made by the Lord just to save Sundarar from the woes of wedded life. In proof of his claim the old man produced an old palm leaf document of bondage executed by the grandfather of Sundarar. All were upset because it was very unusual for a Brahman to be a slave of another Brahman. Sundarar, who lost his patience, forcibly snatched the document from the old man and tore it to pieces. Thereupon the old man raised a hue and cry. All agreed to take the case to the assembly at Tiruveṇṇainallūr, the native place of the old man. The plaintiff's case was first presented in the presence of the learned Brahmans of the sabha. The judges pronounced that it was never a convention in society to enslave a Brahman. The plaintiff submitted that the grandfather of the defendant had agreed that he himself and his descendants would serve as slaves and to that effect executed a bond. The judges then called upon the defendant to express his views. Sundarar said that he was an *Ādi-Śaiva* of the same village which fact was known to all the members of the *Sabha*. He pleaded innocence. The judges then asked the plaintiff to prove his claim by one of the three kinds of evidence namely convention, documents and eyewitness. The old man said that the palm-leaf torn earlier by Sundarar was only a true copy of the original and then produced the original at the court. The document was examined by the accountant and he read out its contents by which the grandfather of the defendant, a Vedic Brahman of Navalūr, who willingly and knowingly executed in favour of the plaintiff, the great *Pittan* of Veṇṇainallūr, that he himself and his descendants were bound to serve him. The court satisfied itself with regard to the genuineness of the deed by examining its age, contents and signatures of witness by checking it with another document written in the hand of Sundarar's grandfather taken out from the record office. Thereupon the judges gave their

judgement that the defendant had lost his case and declared that he was the slave of the plaintiff.

From the foregoing account, however mythical the story may be, we get a fair idea of the methods of judicial procedure, the examination of evidence and the promptness of judicial enquiry and judgement. This case shows the amount of importance attached to documentary evidence for deciding a case.

In the Tirunilakaṇṭa Nayanar Purāṇam there is another incident where the Brahmans of Tillai were asked to settle a dispute. The dispute was between Tirunilakaṇṭan, a potter and an ascetic. The ascetic left a clay vessel in the custody of the potter asking him to return it when he wanted it. When the ascetic returned after some time and demanded the clay vessel the potter could not return it for it was lost somehow in the house. The ascetic demanded that the potter holding the hand of his wife should swear standing in water that he had not stolen it.⁸³ The potter who had taken a vow not to touch his wife was in a dilemma. He requested the ascetic to permit him to swear alone. Thereupon the ascetic brought the case to the *sabha* of Brahmins residing in Tillai. They decided that he should swear along with his wife.⁸⁴ Then the potter swore without touching his wife by holding a stick in between them. This incident shows how the members of the *Sabha* took cognisance of even such petty offences and dispensed justice.

The *Sabha* at Sēyñālūr had to decide on a dispute in which a boy tending a flock of cows of the village was believed to have milked the cows and wasted it without the knowledge of the owners. The owners lodged a complaint before the members of the *sabha*. The members immediately sent for the father of the boy. He was produced before the court and was admonished. The father took the warning of the court and agreed to punish his son.⁸⁵ Here again the great importance enjoyed by the *sabha* in judicial affairs is revealed.

83 386.

84 394.

85 1244, 1245.

The Periyapurānam mentions that Bells of Justice were hung at the entrance of palaces so that any one can easily seek justice from the king.⁸⁶ Sekkilar narrates in detail the way Manu Nidi Chōḷa dispensed justice on seeing the death of a calf run over by the chariot driven by his son. The king was shocked and his grief was unbearable. The ministers consoled him saying that expiation may be made according to the laws laid down in the scriptures. But the king never agreed to the counsel and insisted that his son should similarly be killed under the wheels of the chariot. Ministers reiterated that there was no precedence where capital punishment was given for similar offences. Lastly when the ministers feared to put the prince under the chariot wheels, the king himself drove the chariot over his only son and upheld the law of *dharma*.⁸⁷ However incredible the account may be, two points are clearly illustrated, namely, the king's extreme regard for justice and the custom of keeping justice bells.

86 112, 577.

87 114, 117-118, 120-122, 123, 128-129.

In many places (98, 100, 110, 122, 124, 129, 134) the king emphasises that he as a follower of the Laws of Manu should always strive to dispense justice without fear or favour. The name Manu Nidi Chōḷa means "the king who upholds the Laws of Manu in his reign". It is curious to note the way Manu Nidi Chōḷa meted out justice to the cow when its calf was killed by his son's chariot. He appeased the loss of the cow by allowing his only son to be killed similarly. This way of dispensing justice is not prescribed in the Law codes expounded by Manu. Manu allows a milder form of punishment. G. Buhler, *The Laws of Manu, Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. 25, ch. viii, codes. 296-298.

If so it is difficult to understand why Manu Nidi Chōḷa inflicted such a cruel punishment to his son. It is perhaps owing to his decision to compensate the loss of life by life. In many places in the Periyapurānam qualities of Manu Dharma Śāstra are extolled and it is quite obvious that kings of those times prided themselves in saying that they were the descendants of Manu, the first law giver to the Hindu community.

MILITARY ORGANISATION

There are five commanders-in-chief among the sixty-three Nayanmars of the Periyapuram. Sekkilar gives detailed accounts of certain wars waged in the time of the Nayanmars. From these accounts one gets an idea of the organisation of the forces and the system of warfare that prevailed in the time of the Nayanmars.

A well-equipped army was always considered to be an essential element of the State. The office of the Sēnāpati (commander-in-chief) was one of very high rank. It is said that this office was higher than that of a minister and it was called in Tamil as *Enādippaṭṭam*.⁸⁸ One of the saints mentioned in the Periyapuram was Ēnādināda Nayanar and his profession was to give military training to the king. He also imparted training in warfare to many young men.⁸⁹ He perhaps took up this profession after retiring from the position of Sēnāpati. Siṟuttoṇḍa Nayanar, Mānakkāñjāra Nayanar, Ēyarkōn Kalikkāma Nayanar and Kōṭpuli Nayanar are the four commanders-in-chief mentioned in the Periyapuram.

FOUR FORCES

The army was organised in the traditional manner with the four divisions – the chariots, the elephants, the cavalry and the infantry.⁹⁰ The war chariots built to accommodate two persons the driver and the soldier – and drawn by horses, formed an integral part of military equipment. Some of the chariots had automatic devices to throw deadly weapons on the enemy forces⁹¹ The elephant corps formed an important unit of the forces.⁹² The elephants were mostly

88 K. S. Vaidyanathan, "Ancient South Indian Army—Their Assembly and its functions", *Q. J. M. S.*, Vol. 32, 1941–42, p. 132.

89 610, 619.

90 583, 978, 3959.

91 579.

92 3945.

imported from Ceylon and Pegu while some were bred in the Tamil country.⁹³ They were looked after by the mahout. They were bathed in tanks and rivers and they were decorated with costly ornaments.⁹⁴ Cavalry played an important role in wars.⁹⁵ As Tamil country was not breeding horses, it is probable that they were imported in large numbers from Sind, Persia and Arabia.⁹⁶ Descriptions of soldiers mounted on horses making swift charges on the enemy are given in the *Periyapurāṇam*.⁹⁷ The infantry or foot soldiers formed the largest division in the army organisation. Soldiers were armed mainly with bows and arrows, swords and spears. Other weapons used in warfare included *palagai* (buckler), *surigai* (dirk), *parasu* (battle axe), *taṇḍu* (stick), *pinḍi palaṅgan* (a kind of missile), *musalam* (a pestle like weapon), *varivil* (a kind of bow), *gatai* (cudgel), *chakkaram* (sharp edged and circular weapon), *muṟkaram* (large club), *satti* (mortar), *kaḷukaḍai* (spike), *eṟimuttalai* (a kind of missile), *kappaṇam* (javelin) and *eṟpayilkōl* (a kind of missile).⁹⁸

WARFARE

Generally fighting was confined to the respective divisions of the army namely between elephants and elephants, horses and horses and soldiers and soldiers. Hand to hand fight and fights with swords and shields between soldiers seem to have been widely followed.⁹⁹

There were many causes for waging wars. Wars were waged to bring under submission the turbulent feudatory

93 T. V. Mahalingam, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

94 561-562. The royal elephant of king Puṅgaḷchchoḷa, when he was camping at Karūr was bathed in the river Āmbrāvati.

95 3946-3963.

96 T. V. Mahalingam, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

97 3963.

98 415, 417, 491, 580, 3965, 3967.

99 3961, 3962, 3963, 3964.

chiefs who refused the payment of tribute to the overlord. The ministers of king Pugaḷchchōḷa reported that one chieftain by name Adihan failed to pay tributes. The king at once asked his minister to invade the territory of the chieftain.¹⁰⁰ Lust for power and ambition for acquiring more land resulted in wars. The Pāṇḍya king Ninṛa Sīr Neḍumāraṇ fought the battle of Nelvēli to check the invasion of a king from North.¹⁰¹ Another important cause of wars was the desire of kings to earn military glory. Siṟuttoṇḍa Nayanar led the forces of Pallava king and destroyed Vātāpi.¹⁰² Kōṭpuli Nayanar, a commander-in-chief of the Chōḷa forces led the forces similarly to subdue the enemies.¹⁰³ Duels were frequently undertaken for the purpose of achieving supremacy in rank. Ēnādināda Nayanar, who was a soldier of repute imparting training to others in warfare was challenged by another soldier by name Adisūran.¹⁰⁴

In the Tamil country warlike operations were divided into five namely, *veṭci*, *vaṇji*, *uḷiṇṇai*, *tumbai*, and *vāgai*, respectively corresponding to the regions of *Kuṟiṇṇi*, *Mullai*, *Marudam*, *Neydal* and *Pālai*. All these denotes the names of flowers and each flower symbolises the incident in the stages of warfare.¹⁰⁵ *Veṭci* refers to the act of lifting of the enemy's cattle and it was the first step in the declaration of war. This took place in *Kuṟiṇṇi* since large herds of cattle were reared in the mountainous region. The soldiers wore the garlands of *veṭci* flower, and divided the spoils among themselves. *Vaṇji* corresponds to the *Mullai* region and it tells of the expedition into the enemy's country through forests where forts were safely situated. The next

100 3957-3972.

101 4071-4076.

102 3664-3665.

103 4136

104 612-618.

105 P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Pre-Āryan Tamil Culture*, 1928, p. 253.

step in the warfare namely the siege of the fort of the enemy situated in the *marudam* region was termed *Uḷḷinjñai*. *Tumbai* denotes the fierce fighting after making way into the fort. *Vāgai* deals with the glorious aspect of victory.¹⁰⁶

In the foregoing account an attempt has been made to describe the organisation of government as revealed by the Periyapurānam. The picture we get is that of a benevolent kingship, ruling the country in conformity with the '*Dharma Śāstras*', following the wise counsels of responsible ministers, a judicial administration that rendered prompt justice and a military organisation capable of satisfying the needs of the time. Any institution and its worth can be properly understood only in the context of the society in which it is found. Hence an account of the society as revealed by the Periyapurānam will be of immense interest which will be the subject matter of the following chapter.

An attempt is made here to study some of the features of the social organisation and of the social life of the Tamils in the age of the Nayanmars. It has been mentioned earlier that the ancient Tamils divided the country into five natural regions. People led different kinds of life in the five natural regions, mostly influenced by the environment. In the *Pālai* people led the life of nomads, in *Kuṇṇi* that of hunters, in *Mullai* pastoral life and in *Neydal* sea-faring life. It is only the people in the *Marudam* region led a more highly cultured and civilized life than those of other regions.

In the study of society and culture, the study of social structure is of vital importance because the study of social structure enables us to know how the various units of the society, which are in direct or indirect contact with one another, behave in their social life with one another. The social structure of India in general and of the Tamil country in particular, was based on caste system, which had come down from very early times. In northern India the Āryan society was divided into four major classes on the basis of 'varṇa' meaning colour or complexion. They were the *Brahmans* or the priestly class, the *Kshatriya* or the military class, the *Vaisya* or the merchant class and *Sūdra* or the artisan and menial class.¹ Later caste came to be identified with the particular social function which in course of time became hereditary. This system was evolved "to keep the social fabric in a harmonious condition; but in later ages it became a divisive force."²

1 Emile Senart, *Caste in India*, p. 94.

2 T. M. P. Mahadevan, *Outlines of Hinduism*, p. 69.

In the Tamil country we hear of a four-fold social division in the Tamil grammar *Tolkāppiyam*: of 'Arivar' men of knowledge who became later known as *Brahmans*, 'Uḷavar' those who ploughed the land who became later the *Vēḷāḷas*, 'Arasar' those who ruled the country and 'Vaṇigar' or traders.³ This four-fold social division in the Tamil country cannot be said to have corresponded to the "Varṇa" (colour) system of the Sanskritists mentioned in the previous paragraph.⁴ The 'Arasar' (the king), 'Vaṇigar' (merchants) and the 'Vēḷāḷar' (peasants) do not clearly correspond to the *Kshatriyas*, the *Vaiśyas* and the *Sūdras* of the Aryan caste system. The right of inter-marriage between the Kings ((*Arasar*) and the 'Vēḷāḷas' and the fact that the right of kingship vested also in the *Vēḷāḷas* shows that social and political equality of the *Vēḷāḷas* with the kings. The 'Vēḷāḷas' of the Tamil country were not the 'Sūdras' of North India. Therefore it is not right to deduce that the Aryans were responsible for introducing the four-fold division in the Tamil country. The indigenous divisions and sub-divisions based entirely on occupations later came to be amalgamated with the four-fold division based on colour.⁵ In course of time the caste system assumed a hereditary character and became rigid.

The four major castes are themselves sub-divided into innumerable sub-castes. The caste of most of the sixty-three Nayanmars are given in the Periyapurānam and they represented a variety of castes that existed in the Tamil country.

Isaiñāniyār – mother of Sundarar, Saḍaiyanār – father of Sundarar, Sundarar and Puḡaḷttuṇai Nayanar belonged to the *Ādi Śaiva* sect. As the name of the sect indicates (*Ādi* = ancient) they were Śaivites from time immemorial.

3 *Tolkāppiyam* - Puḡattai 20.

4 N. Subramaniam, *Caste in the Tamil country*, pp.8-9.

5 K.K. Pillay, "The caste system in the Saṅgam age", *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. XL, part iii, 1962, p.515.

The singers of *Tēvāram* hymns in Śaiva temples are said to belong to this caste. They are called as 'Īduvār' (reciters).⁶

Appūdiyaḍigaḷ Nayanar, Rudra Pasupati Nayanar, Gaṇanāda Nayanar, Kuṅgiliyakkalaya Nayanar, Saṇḍesura Nayanar, Siṟappuli Nayanar, Sōmāsīmāṟa Nayanar, Sambandar, Tirunilanakka Nayanar, Naminandiyaḍigaḷ Nayanar, Pūsalār Nayanar and Muṟuga Nayanar belonged to the 'Andaṇar' caste.⁷

Idaṅgaḷi Nayanar, Kōchcheṅgaḷ Chōḷa Nayanar, Chēramān Perumāḷ Nayanar, Niṉṟa Siṟ Neḍumāra Nayanar, Maṅgayarkkarasiyār, Puḡaḷch Chōḷa Nayanar, Aiyāḍigaḷ Kaḍavarkōn Nayanar, Kaḷarsīṅga Nayanar, Kūṟruva Nayanar, Narasiṅga Munaiyaraia Nayanar and Meypporuḷ

6 E. Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of South India*, Vol. I, p. 4.

7 The word 'Andaṇar' has a significance of its own. It cannot be treated as an equivalent to the Sanskrit *Brahman*. *Andaṇars* "were the community of seers, ascetics, priests, philosophers and scholars, who were attracted by the fascinating metaphysics, of the Āryan *Brahmins* and so converted themselves to *Brahmanism* and became the sponsors and custodians of Āryan culture and Vedic rituals. Of course a few North Indian *Brahmins* also arrived on the scene (Tamil country) and were called *Vaḍamar* (northerners) and it has been in the hands of these Tamil *Brahmins* that unadulterated Vedic culture and Sanskritic traditions have been preserved for posterity"-N. Subrahmanian, *Saṅgam Polity*, p. 257.

Within the *Brahman* caste there are two major divisions in the Tamil country those who worshipped Śiva are called *Aiyer* and others who worshipped Viṣṇu are called *Aiyaṅār*.

In Tamil the term *Aiyer* usually denoted men of good learning and character. Sēkkiḷār calls three Nayanmars as *Aiyer*. 1. Kaṇṇappa Nayanar who belonged to the tribe of hunters has been called as *Aiyer* 2. Tirunāḷai-ppōvār Nayanar who belonged to the 'Paraiya' caste has been called by Sēkkiḷār as *Aiyer*. 3. Tirunilakaṇṭa Yaḷppāṇar belonged to the *Pāṇar* caste and he has also been called as 'Aiyer' by Sēkkiḷār.

Nayanar belonged to the class of 'Arasar' or royal families.* It included chieftains also and shows how kings were pious devotees and extended their patronage to Saivism.

Amarniti Nayanar, Iyarpagai Nayanar, Kalikkamba Nayanar, Kāraikkāl Ammaiār and Mūrti Nayanar belonged to the 'Vaṇigar' or merchant class. Usually the term 'Vaṇigar' denoted oil-mongers but in a wider sense it included merchants engaged in multifarious trading activities. But from the Periyapurānam we do not get precise information regarding the trade in which the Nayanmars were engaged.⁹

Arivāḷtāya Nayanar, Ilaiyānguḍi Māra Nayanar, Ēyarkōn Kalikkāma Nayanar, Kōṭṭpuli Nayanar, Satti Nayanar, Sākkiya Nayanar, Seruttuṇai Nayanar, Appar, Mānakkañjāra Nayanar, Munaiyāḍuvār Nayanar, Mūrka Nayanar, Vāyilār Nayanar and Viṇanmiṇḍa Nayanar belonged to the *Vēḷāḷa* caste. The *Vēḷāḷas* are the tillers of the soil and the word *Vēḷāḷa* is derived from the term 'Vēḷāṇmai' meaning cultivation.¹⁰ The *Vēḷāḷar* themselves were subdivided into 'superior' and 'inferior' caste. The superior *Vēḷāḷas* possessed land and just supervised the agricultural operations while the inferior *Vēḷāḷas* were actually cultivators working in the fields as labourers personally engaged in tilling, sowing and reaping. The above mentioned Periyapurānam Nayanmars belonged to the superior *Vēḷāḷa* caste.

8 As mentioned earlier the class of kings 'Arasar' cannot be equated with the *Kshatriyas* of the Āryan system for the Tamil kings intermarried with the *vēḷāḷas* who were agriculturists. Many of the petty chieftains belonged to the *Vēḷāḷa* caste.

9 The *Vaṇigar* or merchant class were mostly merchants and must have often dealt in agricultural products too and they do not exactly correspond to the *Vaisyas*.

10 E. Thurston, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 361.

The main occupation of the *Vēḷāḷas* was agriculture. But they also performed certain other functions such as "learning, other than the Vedas, making gifts, ... protection of cows trade and worship". N. Subrahmanian, *Saṅgam Polity*, p. 279.

Ānāya Nayanar and Tirumūla Nayanar belonged to the 'Idaiyar' i.e., pastoral or shepherd caste. The term *Idaiyar* might have come from 'Idai' meaning middle, the shepherds being a kind of intermediate link between the farmers and merchants or people inhabiting the lands which lay midway between the hills and arable lands.¹¹

Siṟuttoṇḍa Nayanar belonged to the *Māmāttira* caste identifiable with the profession of medicine. They were in other words, Physicians.¹²

Tirunilakaṇṭa Nayanar belonged to the caste of 'Kuyavar' (potters). The term may be said to have derived from the word 'ku' signifying earth, the material in which they work, and 'avan' – a personal termination.

Tirunilakaṇṭa Yāḷppāṇar belonged to the 'Pāṇar' caste. This caste, which is peculiar to the Tamil country, is an ancient class of Tamil bards and minstrels.

Adipatta Nayanar belonged to the 'Paradavu' caste. *Paradavas* are popularly known as 'Sembadavar' meaning fishermen. Adipatta Nayanar lived in the coastal town of Nāgappaṭṭinam, obviously a flourishing fishing centre.

Kaṇṇappa Nayanar belonged to the tribe of 'Vēḍar' or hunters.

Ēnādi Nayanar belonged to the *Sāṇṇar* caste whose profession is toddy-drawing. They are also known as 'Shānān'.¹³

Nēsa Nayanar came from the 'Sāliyar' caste. They are weavers and Nēsa Nayanar, as weaver supplied clothes to the Lord's devotees free of cost.

Kaliya Nayanar belonged to the oil-mongers caste which is known as 'Sekkār' after the word 'Sekku' – oil-pressing machine.

Tirukkuṟipputtoṇḍa Nayanar belonged to the 'Vaṇṇar' or washer-man caste.

11 E. Thurston, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 352-353.

12 *Tamil Lexicon*, Vol. V, part II, p. 3162.
C. K. Subramania Mudaliar, *Tiruttoṇḍar Purāṇam*, Vol. VI, p. 586.

13 E. Thurston, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI pp. 363-368.

Tirunālaippōvār Nayanar, popularly known as Nandanār came from the 'Pulaiyar' or butcher caste. The term *Pulaiyar* denotes the *Paṇaiya* caste of modern times. They were considered to be outcastes in society and they usually lived in secluded places called *pulai-p-pāḍi*.¹⁴

The castes of Eripatta Nayanar, Gaṇampulla Nayanar, Kāri Nayanar, Kulachchirai Nayanar, Daṇḍiyaḍigal Nayanar and of Perumīlalaikkurumba Nayanar is not known from the Periyapurānam.

Of the nine groups of Aḍiyārs we know definitely that the Tillaivāḷandaṇar or the *Brahmans* of Tillai (Chidambaram) belonged to the *Brahman* caste. According to tradition, the strength of this particular sect of *Brahmans* was three thousand, and they alone are entitled to administer Lord Naṭarāja temple at Tillai. They are now known as *Dikshitar* and form a limited community of only three hundred or four hundred families. The priests wear a tuft of hair just above the forehead.¹⁵

Another group of Aḍiyārs called 'Muppōdum Tirumāni Tiṇḍuvār' may, by their profession, be said to belong to the *Ādi Śaiva* caste, whose duty was the performance of rituals in temples. We are not able to trace the caste of

14 Untouchability and social segregation was practised from early times in the Tamil country. In the *Saṅgam* period itself the *Pulaiyar* were noted as low class people in society. *Puṇānūru*-82. Appar in his *Tēvāram* refers to *Pulaiyar*, 6: 95: 10.

15 E. Thurston, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 338. At present the number of *Dikshitar*s have dwindled and there are now about 250 married members. They are an endogamous clan. They never live outside Chidambaram and they are enjoined not to resort to any other occupation or means of livelihood than that of service and devotion to Naṭarāja. The *Dikshitar*s have been hereditary trustees of the temple and the management of the temple and its affairs have been vested entirely in their hands. Every *Dikshitar* boy, as soon as he is married, becomes as of right a trustee and 'archaka' (priest) of the temple and his trusteeship is inalienable.

Economy of a South Indian Temple, p. 40.

seven other devotees namely Appālum Aḍichchārndār, Sittattai Sivanpalē Vaittār, Tiruvārūr-p-piṇḍār, Pattarāip-paiṇvār, Paramanaiyēpāḍuvār, Poyyaḍimaiyillāda Pulavar and Muḷunirupūsiya Munivar.

From the foregoing account it will be seen that the Periyapuranam Nayanmars belonged to different castes that existed in the Tamil country. Irrespective of their caste, all of them had absolute faith in the worship of Lord Śiva for attaining salvation. This shows that caste never stood in the way of establishing communion with God. That the social restrictions obtaining in those days denied freedom of worship to persons belonging to the so-called low castes is mentioned in the Periyapuranam more than once.¹⁶

Tirunālaippōvār Nayanar who is popularly known as Nandanār belonged to the '*Pulaiyar*' or *Paraya* caste and he was allowed to worship only by standing at the entrance of temples.¹⁷ At Tiruppungūr '*Nandi*' – the huge stone image of the Sacred Bull obstructed Tirunālaippōvār Nayanar from having a clear view of the presiding deity at the *Sanctum Sanctorum*. The Lord Śiva was moved by the piety of the Nayanar and, it is said that by His Grace the Sacred Bull moved to one side and allowed the Nayanar to have a clear view. It is said in the Periyapuranam that the Nayanar, when he went to worship Lord Naṭarāja at Tillai, was afraid, because of his low caste, even to enter the city.¹⁸ The Lord took pity on him and asked the Brahman priests at Tillai to allow the Nayanar to worship inside the temple after a purification ceremony by undergoing an ordeal by fire.¹⁹ The Nayanar accordingly underwent the ablution ceremony and then entered the temple to worship the Lord.

16 Until recent times this restriction was in force. In 1930's government had to pass an Act declaring that preventing low caste people from entering temples was an offence.

17 1055. 2-3, 1058. 1-2.

18 1063. 1-4, 1067. 1.

19 1068. 1-4.

Similarly Tirunīlakaṇṭa Yāḷppāṇa Nayanar, who belonged to the *Pāṇar* caste was not allowed to go inside the temple at Ālavāy (Madurai), because of his low caste.²⁰ The Nayanar sat at the entrance of the temple and sang in praise of Lord Śiva through his 'Yāḷ'-harp. The Lord was moved by his devotional music and asked the temple priests by His Divine Voice to honour the Nayanar by providing him a plank to sit and tune the yāḷ.²¹ The devotees accordingly provided the Nayanar a plank to sit on. Later when the Nayanar went to the temple at Tiruvārūr, he was allowed by a separate entrance on the northern side to go in and worship the Lord.²²

One of the sixty-three Nayanmars believed in the superiority of his caste and was admonished by God in his dream for his caste consciousness. Naminandiyaḍigal Nayanar belonged to the Brahman caste and one day when the Lord was brought in procession along the streets the Nayanar mixed with all classes of people in worshipping him.²³ Later in the evening he repaired to his house and felt that his body had been polluted by mixing with all sorts of people. He wanted to purify his body and then enter the house and so demanded his wife to make arrangements for bath. Before his wife could get things ready for his bath the Nāyanār had a nap and this resulted in the neglect of his nightly *pūja* to the deity at home. Lord Śiva appeared in the dream of the Nayanar and told the Aḍiyar not to discriminate on the basis of caste those who worshipped Him. They were all equal to the Nayanar in purity of soul. The Nayanar realised his folly and rushed to the temple at Tiruvārūr and begged pardon of the Lord. The Lord pardoned him and later admitted him into His abode.²⁴

20 4217. 1-4.

21 4220. 1-4.

22 4221. 4, 4222. 1-4.

23 1869. 1-4.

24 1892. 1-4, 1895. 1-2.

With the above exception of Naminandiyadigaḷ Nayanar, caste distinction was not observed by the Nayanmars. Sambandar though he belonged to the Brahman caste, had great respect for Tirunilakaṇṭa Yālpāṇar, a low born saint, and always took him along during his pilgrimage. Sambandar also had great reverence to his elder contemporary Appar, who was a *Vēḷāḷa*. Appar was also respected and entertained by a Brahmin saint – Appūdiyaḍigaḷ Nayanār. He considered and worshipped Appar as a super-human being. Sundarar, who belonged to the 'Ādi Śaiva' caste entertained the Chēra king Chēramān Perumāḷ Nayanār at his house at Tiruvārūr and also went on pilgrimage with him.²⁵

In society theoretically the caste divisions continued to prevail. However the distinction ceased to be important among the devotees of Śiva as exemplified by the lives of the Nayanmars. The Periyapurānam infact reflects through these stories the ideas of a section of society which tried to break through the barriers of caste divisions, thus elevating the concept of *Bhakti* to a superior plane. *Bhakti* or deep devotion of the Nayanmars tended to over look caste in the presence of God. There was democratic equality among the Nayanmars in worship irrespective of caste or age or sex. All were considered to be equal before God and all of them attained salvation by dint of their devotion and selfless sacrifice. But the same was not the case in ordinary social life. That is why it has been said earlier as to how society laid restrictions on the worship of low caste people. Hence the rigidity of caste distinctions with its attendant evils as existing in the period of the Nayanmars is only indirectly revealed by the work under study.

In the Tamil country the distinction between the life of a householder and that of an ascetic is indicated by the terms "*Ilḷaṇṇam*" and "*Tuṟavaṇṇam*". The former refers to the life led in the midst of family and friends, and the latter

25 Sundarar married two ladies both of whom belonged to different castes to which Sundarar did not belong to. But inter-marriage cannot be considered as a normal practice.

to the life of solitude and penance. Eventhough there is a certain amount of sanctity attached to the latter way of life, the former course was preferred to an ascetic life even by some of the devotees of Śiva. Many of the Nayanmars led the life of a house-holder rather than that of an ascetic. The wives of the Nayanmars played a notable role in many ways such as helping their husbands in carrying out rituals of daily worship and in entertaing other devotees.

Tirunilanakka Nayanar, a native of Sāitamaṅgai in the Chōḷa country, devoted himself to the performance of rituals according to Āgamic rules to the Lord at the Aiyavanti temple. His wife accompanied the Nayanar to the temple and helped him by handing in the required things in order while performing rituals.²⁶ Similarly the wife of Arivāṭṭāya Nayanar also helped her husband in performing the rituals to the Lord at Gaṇamaṅgalam in the Chōḷa country. She cooked rice and also a variety of dishes out of greens and carried them along with the Nayanar to the temple.²⁷

The wives of some of the Nayanmars took great delight in entertaining other devotees who came as guests to their homes. A devotee came to the house of Ilaiyāṅkuṭi Māra Nayanar late one night hungry and soaked in rain. The Nayanar gladly welcomed the devotee and attended to his comforts. But the Nayanar having lost all his wealth in entertaining devotees had nothing to eat. Still he and his devoted wife wanted to feed the guest who had come in rain with hunger. The Nayanar's wife by her presence of mind suggested to the Nayanar to go to the fields (in that dark rainy night) and fetch the paddy that was sown for cultivation. The Nayanar did so and instantly his wife cooked rice and prepared side dish and sauce with the greens that grew in their garden. So great was her piety and her desire to be hospitable to devotees whatever be the hour they came.²⁸

26 1832. 3-4, 1836, 1-4.

27 916. 1-4.

28 448-463.

Śrūttonḍā Nayanar was also in the habit of entertaining devotees every day and one day he had a *Bhairava* ascetic as guest. The ascetic demanded tender human flesh and the Nayanar agreed to serve the dish asked for. According to the Periyapurāṇam the Nayanar's wife agreed to cook human flesh and gladly sacrificed her own son, cooked his flesh and served the *Bhairava* ascetic. However, the incident itself may look somewhat abnormal and also unnatural. But two things are clearly borne out from it – namely the amount of respect the Nayanar and his wife had for the devotee of Śiva and the high degree of hospitality combined with the sincere desire to give whatever the guests asked for.²⁹

The wives of two other Nayanmars went to the extent of concealing the death of their son in one instance and the death of the husband himself in another instance when they, by force of circumstances, had to play host to devotees. When Appar visited the residence of Appūḍiyaḍigaḷ Nayanar preparations were in progress to serve a sumptuous dinner. The eldest son of Appūḍiyaḍigaḷ Nayanar who had gone out to fetch plantain leaves for serving food was bitten by snake and died. The Nayanar and his wife suppressed the tragic news lest Appar should refuse to have food in the house of mourning.³⁰ Similarly the wife of Ēyarkōṇkalikkāma Nayanar hid the body of the Nayanar himself when she learnt about the arrival of Sundarar to their residence, and welcomed Sundarar with a smiling face.³¹ This reveals the truth that the noble women of those days set aside their personal griefs when they had to entertain devotees.

The list of the sixty-three Nayanmars includes three women devotees namely Kāraikkāl Ammaiṃār, Maṅgaiyarkarasī Ammaiṃār and Isaiṇāni Ammaiṃār. Kāraikkāl Ammaiṃār was named by her parents as Punitavadiyār and by way of showing reverence Sekkilar refers to her in the

29 3702–3726.

30 1810–1811.

31 3550–3553.

Periyapurāṇam as Kāraikkāl Ammaiṃ after her native town Kāraikkāl. From her early days she had developed an intense devotion to God and was given to the study of religious literature and to the service of God intoxicated saints. She was wedded to a wealthy merchant by name Paramadattan. She possessed divine qualities and after renouncing the earthly life went on pilgrimage to Kailāsa and received the Blessings of Lord Śiva. She composed two garlands of devotional songs - the first one titled '*Arpudattiruvandādi*' and second one '*Tiruvirattaimaṇimalai*'.³²

Maṅgayarkkarasi was a daughter of a Chōḷa king and was married to the Pāṇḍya king Niṇṇa Sir Neḍumāraṇ who was also one of the sixty-three Periyapurāṇam Nayanmars. She championed the cause of Śaivism as against Jainism adopted by her husband. This clearly shows the tolerant attitude and the amount of religious freedom that prevailed in a family where the wife and husband belonged to different faiths. Along with the help of the prime-minister Kulachchirai Nayanar, who is also included in the list of the Nayanmars, she was largely responsible for bringing back the Pāṇḍya king to the Śaiva fold.³³

Isaiṇāni Ammaiṃ was the mother of Sundarar. She deserves special praise because it was her son Sundarar who gave out the list of Nayanmars and he himself included the name of his mother in the '*Tiruttonḍattogai*', thereby showing his reverence to her.³⁴

Tilakavati, sister of Appar, played a notable role in propagating Śaivism countering the influence of Jainism. Tilakavati and Appar lost their parents when they were young. Tilakavati wanted to commit suicide when she heard the death of her fiancé. But on the appeal made by Appar she dedicated to live as a spinster to bring up her brother. Appar came under the influence of Jains and got himself converted to Jain faith. Tilakavati who was a pious devotee

32 1717-1782.

33 4189-4191.

34 4228.

of Śiva was much perturbed to see her brother embracing Jainism. She passionately appealed to Śiva and accordingly Appar returned to the Śaiva faith.³⁵

From the foregoing account of the women folk referred to in the Periyapurāṇam, it will be seen that women played an important role in the spiritual activities of their husbands. Many had the courage to correct their husbands or brothers whenever they strayed from the path of true devotion. They visited temples and took part in public festivals. This reveals the fact that the social life was very much enlivened by women participating freely in the day to day life.

It is widely believed that meat eating was given up and vegetarianism was upheld owing to the impact of Jainism and Buddhism in the Tamil country. Both of them advocated the principle of '*Ahimsa*' or non-killing of animals. In later times Śaivism came to be largely identified with vegetarianism. Sekkilar describes fishing as a cruel profession.³⁶

The staple food consisted of grains and pulses. The chief cereal used was paddy of which there were many varieties. Rice was cooked by boiling it in water and the cooked rice was called by many terms such as '*amudu*', '*sōṟu*', etc.³⁷

The Tamils were well versed in the culinary art and there are many references in the Periyapurāṇam to the variety of dishes served in feasts. Eatables were broadly divided into four kinds on the basis of the way of eating as '*uṇbana*', '*tinbana*', '*nakkuvana*' and '*paruguvana*'.³⁸ Food

35 1299-1333.

36 1112. For a philosophical explanation of identifying vegetarianism with Śaivism see S. Sabaratna Mudaliar, *Essentials of Hinduism*, pp. 146-147.

37 *Amudu* - 459, 1468, 1735, 1805, 2464, 3627, 3823, 3817, 4016.

Sōṟu. 656, 1086.

38 443. *Uṇbana* = to swallow without biting.
tinbana = to bite and eat, to chew.

products were cooked in six different tastes – ‘*kaippu*’, ‘*pulippu*’, ‘*inippu*’, ‘*tuvarppu*’, ‘*kārppu*’ and ‘*uvarppu*’.³⁹ Side dishes were made of tasty vegetables and out of greens alone a variety of dishes is prepared. Fruits like mangoes were also served along with rice and other dishes. Usually food was served on plantain leaves which are easily available in plenty in Tamil country. Tender plantain leaf was considered to be the most suited one for serving food. Milk and milk products such as curd, butter and ghee were also largely used.⁴⁰

There are references to non-vegetarian food in the life of Kaṇṇappa Nayanar and Siṛuttoṇḍa Nayanar. In the Kaṇṇappa Nayanar Puranam we get a detailed description of tribal food. Cooked rice was mixed with honey, which was easily obtained from the honeycombs in forest, and meat. In the hilly region many varieties of rice were grown which are termed as ‘*aivana aḍiṣil*’, ‘*pul arisi*’ and ‘*mūṅgil arisi*’. Pork was considered to be very tasty and delicious. The tribal people took certain variety of roots and fruits also.⁴¹ In the Siṛuttoṇḍa Nayanar Puranam there is reference to the cooking of human flesh which is rather unique in the annals of Tamil country.⁴² It is quite an abnormal act and from a single reference it is not safe to arrive at any general conclusion. Intoxicating drinks were popular, particularly among the tribal people.⁴³

According to the Periyapuranam men and women wore attractive and costly clothes. The Tamils knew the manufacture of cloth of fine texture with colourful designs. One of the Nayanmars – Nesa Nayanar came from a family of

nakkuvana = to lick, lap.

paruguvana = to drink.

39 443, 519, 1805, 3819, 3823. *Kaippu* = bitterness, *pulippu* = sourness, *inippu* = sweetness, *tuvarppu* = astringent taste, *kārppu* = pungency, *uvarppu* = saltishness.

40 461, 1805, 1469, 2464, 3673, 4092, 4014.

41 656, 683–684, 742, 766–768.

42 3724–3725.

43 685.

weavers. Besides cotton cloth, silk cloth was also manufactured in large scale in the Tamil country. Cotton cloth is referred to as '*tugil*', '*aṟuvai*', '*tuṇi*' and '*tuṇḍu*'.⁴⁴ The yarn was so fine that the texture looked like slough and was as thin as smoke. Silk cloth is noted by terms such as '*paṭṭāḍai*', '*ponnarum uttariyam*' and '*portugil*'; and '*maṇikiḷārāḍai*', perhaps denoted the cloth specially decorated with beads.⁴⁵ People wore well washed clothes. One of the Nayanmars – Tirukkuṟipputtonḍa Nayanar belonged to washermen caste and he washed the clothes of devotees free of cost. The tribal people living in mountains wore clothes made of leather, dried leaves, pea-cock feathers and tiger skin.⁴⁶

The Tamils delighted in adorning almost every part of the human body by some kind of ornament. The variety and richness of the ornaments mentioned in Tamil literature of the *Saṅgam* period reflect the fine taste of the people and show the aesthetic sense of the times.⁴⁷ There are innumerable references to various kinds of ornaments in the Periyapurāṇam and these ornaments can be best described in relation to the part of the body upon which they were worn.

'*Suṭṭi*' was an ornament worn on the forehead. If it consisted of teeth of tiger, it was called '*puliyugir suṭṭi*'.⁴⁸ '*kuḷai*', '*kudambai*' and '*tōḍu*' were the ornaments worn on ears.⁴⁹ The neck ornaments that are referred to in the Periyapurāṇam includes '*kaṇḍigai*', '*muttu mālai*', '*taṇḍa mālai*', '*nila maṇi mālai*' and '*aimpaḍaittāli*'.⁵⁰ '*Aimpaḍaittāli*' was a sacred chain hung around the neck of children

44 414, 535, 537.

45 162, 263, 330, 414.

46 656, 697, 710, 717, 942, 1628.

47 S. Venkatarama Chettiar, "Paḷantamiḷar aḷagu seidu koṇḍatu eppaḍi" (பழந்தமிழர் அழகு செய்து கொண்டு எப்படி?) *Sri Venkateswara University Journal*, Vol. X, 1949, pp. 1-20.

48 669, 3680.

49 176, 878, 1908, 3422, 288, 331, 707.

50 52, 238, 1167, 658, 839, 709, 905, 3680, 1898, 150.

to ward off evils. 'Vaiyira vaḷaiyal' (made of diamond), 'veḷ vaḷaiyal' (made of shells) and 'kāppu' were the ornaments worn on the arms.⁵¹ The ornaments worn on the legs and toes included 'sadaṅgai', 'kaḷal', 'silambu' 'taṇḍai', 'nūṟpuram' and 'kiṅkiṇi'.⁵² Most of these ornaments worn on different parts of the body were made of gold and the nine gems and some were of silver. Baser metals and common beads were used by the poor.

Cosmetics were profusely used in beautifying the hair, skin or complexion. These consist of sandal pastes, powders and pomades, which serve to remove from the skin any discoloration, freckle or pimple and help in the healthy growth and add to the attractiveness of the person. In the Tamil epic *Maṇimēkalai* we find that mention is made of cosmetics as a standardized art and that it was practised by the courtesans of the earlier centuries.⁵³

The hair was dressed in various artistic ways with scented oils and pomades. According to the *Periyapurāṇam*, hair was dressed in five ways - 'muḍi', 'kuḷal', 'toṅgal', 'paṇichchai' and 'suruḷ'.⁵⁴ When Kaṇṇappa Nayanar was a young boy his hair was decorated with pea-cock feathers, in line with tribal style, tender leaves and flowers.⁵⁵ The shepherd-saint Āṇāya Nayanar had knotted his hair with a thread studded with gold coins and wore flowers and tender green leaves.⁵⁶

Application of collyrium to the eyelids by women was common. The water for bath on the eve of marriage was medicated with galnut, Indian gooseberry, myrobalans and medicated camphor.⁵⁷ Another aspect of cosmetics referred

51 106, 168, 878, 3680.

52 150, 191, 618, 623, 633, 711, 284, 288, 670, 1949, 1278, 1948, 1955.

53 *Ūralar Kādai*, 11. 17-32.

T. P. Palaniappa Pillai, "Tamilian Cosmetics", *Journal of the Venkateswara University*, Vol. 7, 1946, pp. 22-35.

54 324, 543, 2993.

55 658, 706.

56 940.

57 161.

to in the Periyapuram was the practice of daubing the sandal-cum-saffron paste known as '*sempaṇchukkuḷambu*' on the body. The paste was prepared by compounding together the sandalwood powder with medicated camphor, musk and scented water. The paste was applied to the feet of the bride as well as the bridegroom on marriage occasions.⁵⁸

The houses of rich men were known as '*māḍam*', implying there by that they possessed an upper storey as well. The fact that at present there are no remains of secular buildings of the days of the Nayanmars goes to prove that they must have been built of perishable materials. There were many cities in the age of the Nayanmars and Sekkilar gives a detailed picture of them in the Periyapurnam Sekkilar. devotes a whole chapter to describe the city of Tiruvārūr.⁵⁹ Besides this there are descriptions of cities like Kāñchi, Karuvūr, Madurai, Tillai and Uṇaiyūr. The dwelling places were decorated with mural paintings. Both inside and outside the houses the floor was covered with most elaborate designs with coloured powders. Such ornament of the floor is called '*kōlam*' which means beauty.

Capital cities like Karuvūr had a strong fortification around it. In the heart of the fortress city there was the royal palace which was heavily guarded by royal guards. The fort walls were flanked by a deep moat.⁶⁰

The poorer classes of people lived in huts with wattle and mud walls. This is clear from the description of a typical slum given by Sekkilar in Tirunāḷaiappōvār Nayanar puranam. Since the low caste people lived in slums, they were located at the outskirts of villages. The slum wherein Tirunāḷaiappōvār Nayanar lived was similarly situated at the outskirts of Ādanūr adjoining the paddy fields. Over the thatched roofs of the houses creepers had grown. Chickens

58 163, 330, 319, 3156, 3531.

59 86-135.

60 1163-3947.

and small pups were the play-mates of the urchins in the slum. The urchins wore iron bangles and had tiny bells around their waist. The women folk of the slum had laid their sleeping children on mats of skin. One can hear the 'sweet' folk songs sung by women while pounding rice and also of the beating of drums to the dance of the women folk overcome by toddy.⁶¹

There are references to many social functions in the Periyapurānam relating to the birth of children, naming ceremony, *Upanayanam* and marriage. The birth of Sambandar was celebrated with great eclat by the parents and relatives of Sambandar and by the people of Sirkāḷi. The celebrations lasted for ten days.⁶² The *Brahmans* of the locality rejoiced by creating sacred fire and by performing rituals in their residences. 'Vedas' and 'Mantras' were recited continuously and sounding of a variety of musical instruments was heard all over the place. The baby was smeared with ghee and then bathed ceremoniously.⁶³ Other rituals as laid down in the scriptures were also performed. The house was beautifully decorated with lights and shining jewels. The floor was covered with designs in coloured powders and sweet smelling flowers. Tender greens were grown inside the house. Scented water was kept in golden vessels. Gold coins were distributed as charity and devotees were sumptuously fed. Ghee and other sweet smelling ingredients were put in the sacred fire which spread sweet smell everywhere. All these celebrations were carried out strictly in accordance with the sacred texts and they lasted for ten days. After these celebrations came the naming ceremony of the child. The baby was placed in a well decorated cradle. This was followed by the ceremony of feeding milk to the baby.

61 1046-1050.

62 1924-1939. Similar celebrations lasting for ten days took place when Pūmpāvai, daughter of Sivanēsan (a devotee of Śiva and contemporary of Sambandar at Maiyilāppūr), was born. 2941.

63 Sirāḷadēvar, son of Sīruttonḍa Nayanar was also bathed ceremoniously after his birth by applying ghee; 3677-4.

The Tamils marked the growth of children by different stages by giving names to the stages.⁶⁴ After the naming ceremony sacred ashes were applied to the baby to ward off evils and this stage is called '*kāppup paruvam*'. Then came singing of lullaby in praise of the baby and is known as '*tālāṭṭup paruvam*'. The movement of limbs when the child is five to seven months old is termed as '*seṅgīraip paruvam*' and clapping of hands in the ninth month is known as '*sappāṇip paruvam*'. In the tenth or eleventh month the baby starts crawling and that is called '*muttap paruvam*'. Then the baby starts smiling and recognising others and that stage is noted as '*varugaip paruvam*'. The movement of the baby step by step is known as '*taḷarnaḍaip paruvam*'. '*Viḷaiyāṭṭup paruvam*' denoted the stage when the baby starts playing. When the baby delights in playing on the sands, building small house, it reaches the stage known as '*siṭṭil paruvam*'. Then in the next stage the child starts pushing a small four-wheeled carriage made of wood known in Tamil as '*siṭu tēr*' and that is called '*siṭu tērp paruvam*'. These are the ten stages in the growth of a male child in the first two years. Sekkilar gives a vivid description of these stages in the growth of Sambandar from his birth till he attained the age of three.⁶⁵

Correspondingly there are ten stages in the growth of a female child. The first seven stages are common to male and female children. Girls had their own favourite past times and appropriate games in line with their age, marked the stages in their life. They played '*kaḷal*' – a game similar to dice and that stage is known as '*kaḷaṅup paruvam*'. '*Ammānaip paruvam*' denoted the stage when girls played '*ammānai*' another type of game with coins. They also delighted in building small house-like structures known as '*siṭṭil*' and cooking therein with toy vessels which act is called '*siṭuṣōṟu samaittal*'. They enjoyed going up in air in swing and that stage is known as '*ūsal paruvam*' – '*ūsal*'

64 There are ten stages according to Tamil grammar and poetical works on these are known as *Piḷḷai-t-tamiḷ*.

65 1941-1951.

denoting the swing. Sekkilar describes these stages when he narrates the birth and growth of Pūmpāvai, daughter of Sivanēsan.^{65a} Sekkilar has made some modifications in arranging the various stages in the life of a child.⁶⁶

The birth of the hunter-saint, Kaṇṇappa Nayanar, also was celebrated in all pomp in accordance with the tribal customs. All the tribal people gathered and rejoiced at the birth of Kaṇṇappa Nayanar and danced to the tune of tribal musical instruments. The child was bedecked with jewels and garlands. Sacrifices were made in honour of the tribal God.⁶⁷

Tonsure was another important ceremony for male children. It took place at the age of three.⁶⁸

'Upanayanam' is the ceremony of investiture with the sacred thread. This ceremony, according to the references

65a 2943-46.

66 Stages in the growth of a male child as mentioned by Sekkilar. (the conventional stages are given within brackets)

Male child :

1. *Kāppup paruvam* (*Kāppup paruvam*)
2. *Tālāṭṭup paruvam* (*Seṅgiraip*)
3. *Seṅgiraip paruvam* (*Tālāṭṭup paruvam*)
4. *Sappāṇip paruvam* (*Sappāṇip paruvam*)
5. *Muttap paruvam* (*Muttap paruvam*)
6. *Varugaip paruvam* (*Vārānaip paruvam*)
7. *Tālarnaḍaip paruvam* (*Ambulip paruvam*)
8. *Vilāiyāṭṭup paruvam* (*Sirupaṇaip paruvam*)
9. *Sirril paruvam* (*Sirril paruvam*)
10. *Siru-tēr-uruttal paruvam* (*Siru-tēr-uruttal paruvam*)

Female child : First seven stages are common for male and female children.

8. *Kalaṅgup paruvam* (or *Nirādul paruvam*)
9. *Ammānaip paruvam* (*Ammānaip paruvam*)
- Sirril paruvam*
- Siru sōru paruvam*
10. *Usal paruvam* (*ūsāl paruvam*)

67 663-671.

68 1285.

made to it in the Periyapurānam, took place at the age of seven.⁶⁹ Sundarar commenced his lessons after *Upanayanam*.⁷⁰

Sekkilar describes the *Upanayanam* ceremony of Sambandar in detail. It was done strictly according to Vedic rites. This ceremony is said to be a rebirth to those who undergo it. Sambandar recited Vedas on the occasion and enlightened others on various scriptures and on vedic rites.⁷¹

The most important social function in the life of the individual as well as in the life of the whole community was the marriage. Marriage is not a contract but a very important sacrament in the life of an individual. Marriages were mostly arranged by the parents of the bride and the bridegroom. But there were exceptions also when one party chose the other on his or her own accord.⁷² The proposal first comes from the parents of the bridegroom, who pay a formal visit on an auspicious day, to the parents of the intended bride, and if the latter agree, a formal betrothal ceremony takes place and the date and time of the marriage were fixed. The services of an astrologer was availed of in fixing the auspicious date and time. The wedding ceremonies lasted for one day or for three or five days. Usually the marriage took place in the house of the bride.

Sekkilar gives a vivid description of the ceremonies in narrating the marriages of Sundarar with the daughter of Saṇḍāṅgavi Sivāchchāyār, of Kāraikkāl Ammaiṅyār (who was known as Punitavadi at the time of marriage) with

69 1219.

70 152. Commencement of education also was celebrated as an important ceremony. The first lesson was taught after prayers to God.

For details of this ceremony *vide-chapter*—Education and Literature.

71 2161–2164

72 Sundarar chose both Paravaiṅyār (at Tiruvārūr) and Saṅgiliṅyār (at Tiruvorriyūr) on his own desire. But his first marriage which never took place was arranged by his parents 153.

Paramatattan, of the daughter of Mānakkāñjārā Nayanar with Ēyarkōn Kalikkāma Nayanar, of Sambandar with the daughter of Nambāṇḍār Nambi and of Tilakavatiyār, sister of Appar.⁷³ Seven days before the wedding day seeds of nine variety of grains were sown at the proposed place where wedding was to take place.⁷⁴ On the day prior to wedding, a ceremony known as '*kāppu kaṭṭudal*' – a sort of tying a talisman to ward off evils for the bride took place.⁷⁵ The same ceremony was done for the bridegroom also. The '*kāppu*' (talisman) was made of gold. On the day of marriage, the bridegroom as well as the bride were bathed ceremoniously and were richly clothed and profusely garlanded. Since the marriage usually took place at bride's residence, the bridegroom went in procession from his house to the bride's residence accompanied by the sounding of a variety of musical instruments and of chanting of vedas by priests.⁷⁶

Many ceremonies were performed before the final wedding. Sekkilar in his Periyapuranam does not refer to the tying of the *Tālī* or insignia of marriage, around the bride's neck by the bridegroom.⁷⁷ The tying of *Tālī* is considered to be the central rite in marriages. It is very difficult to trace the origin of this custom. According to

73 153-179, 1724-1727, 881-884, 3059-3141, 1282-1289.

74 Nine grains- 1. wheat, 2. raw rice, 3. pigeon-pea, 4. green gram, 5. Bengal gram, 6. Lyacinth been. 7. sesame, 8. black gram, 9. horse gram. In Sanskrit this ceremony is called '*Aṅgurāṣṣpaṇam*'.

75 In Sanskrit this ceremony is known as '*Ratichā-bandanam*'.

76 Sundarar went on horse back. Sambandar went in palanquin.

77 The *Tālī* consisted of a thread, yellow in colour owing to the application of turmeric, having a piece of gold in the shape of a tooth of tiger or a coin on which was engraved some deity. However they differ from each other in composition, colour and ornamentation. The *Tālī* indicates that an irrevocable bond has been established between the bride and the bridegroom.

some scholars the custom of tying *Tāli* is not in the Aryan canon law and they say that it must have originated in the Tamil country.⁷⁸

The absence of any reference to this rite in the *Periāyapurāṇam* is all the more curious for, epigraphic reference to the *Tāli* as a sacred marriage symbol occurs even as early as the period of Rājārāja (A. D. 985–1014).⁷⁹ The inscription under reference records that queen Sembian Mahādevi made a gift of several ornaments to the Goddess of the temple at Tiruveṇkāḍu, including five *kaḷaṇṇus* of gold for the *Tāli* as a badge together with the chord in which it was tied.

When lovers were not given approval for their marriage by their parents they eloped and there is reference to such an elopement in the *Periāyapurāṇam* in the time of Sambandar. A merchant by name Tāman living at Vaippūr, near Tirumarugal told his nephew (who had lost his parents and lived under the roof of his uncle) that would give the eldest of his seven daughters in marriage to him. But Tāman wedded his eldest daughter to a more wealthy man. Similarly other five daughters were also given in marriage to others although every time the next daughter was promised to be married to him. The seventh and the youngest daughter was also betrothed to some one else. This last daughter took pity on the young man and eloped with him unnoticed on the night prior to the wedding. Unfortunately on their way at Tirumarugal the fiancé was bitten by a poisonous snake and the girl's hopes for a happy wedded life were shattered. At that time Sambandar came on pilgrimage along with his followers to Tirumarugal and heard the tragedy that had occurred. Immediately Sambandar made a passionate appeal to Lord Siva in the temple at Tirumarugal for life to be restored to the young man. Lord Siva

78 P. T. Srinivasa Aiyangar, *Pre-Āryan Tamil Culture*, p. 26. L. A. Cammiade, "The *Tāli* in the social History of Southern India", *Q. J. M. S.*, Vol. X, 1919–20, pp. 149–150.

79 *S. I. I.*, Vol. XIII, No. 144.

listened to the prayer and the young man was restored to life. Later Sambandar himself conducted the wedding ceremony of the young lovers.⁸⁰

At least from one reference in the Periyapuranam we learn that the newly wedded couple were made to live independently in a separate house.⁸¹ But it may not be correct to say that there was no idea of joint-family system.

Whenever a married couple failed to beget children they were given the option to adopt children. This custom seems to have been widely practised in the Tamil country. Sundarar was born to Saḍaiyanār and Isaiñāniyār. But the chieftain Narasiṅga Munaiyaraiya Nayanar adopted Sundarar with the consent of his parents.⁸² Sundarar was brought up in the palace of the chieftain.

Children as well as grown up people spent their leisure in a variety of games and amusements. 'Ammānai' is said to be the favourite game of children. It consisted of throwing up two or three coins simultaneously in the air and catching them without dropping them to the ground.⁸³ The coins were made of wood. Young boys spent their leisure time in flying kite.⁸⁴ Women took delight in playing a kind of ball game.⁸⁵

King Chēramān Perumāḷ Nayanar spent some time in Tiruvārūr as the guest of Sundarar. Both witnessed a few martial games such as the fight between rams, cocks and

80. 2371-2381.

81. 1728.

82. 151. Rulers adopted male children in order to pass on the throne peacefully after their death. Hindus widely believe that they should have at least one male child and if not adopt a male child because according to their belief the eldest son should perform certain rites after the death of his parents so that their soul might rest in peace.

83. *Kalaikkalāñḇiyam*, Vol. I. p. 100. 83. 281, 879, 1171, 2945.

84. 631.

85. 1171, 3873, 3993.

birds.⁸⁶ Similarly when Sundarar visited the Chēra country and stayed as the guest of Chēramān Perumā Nayanar, they witnessed the dancing of beautiful girls accompanied by music. They also saw elephant fights and wrestling matches.⁸⁷

There are references to slavery in the Periyapurānam. Sundarar was claimed by a Brahman of Tirunāvalūr as his slave, and even produced a document in proof of that. Even though men of higher castes were not enslaved, owing to force of economic necessity they served as slaves to others.⁸⁸ Kuṅḡliyakkalaya Nayanar spent away all his wealth in buying and applying incense to Lord. Finally he sold the slaves who were serving under him.⁸⁹ Thus it will be seen that slavery was not an uncommon feature in the Tamil country.⁹⁰

The Periyapurānam contains a reference to brothel house and prostitution. One of the Nayanmars by name Tirunilakaṇṭa Nayanar was in the habit of visiting brothel houses. One day he was censured by his wife for indulging in this vice, and she exhorted the Nayanar in the name of Lord Śiva not to touch women. Tirunilakaṇṭa Nayanar, who had great faith in Lord Śiva, at once realised his folly and from then onwards led a pure life.⁹¹ From this one instance it will not be possible to make a general inference regarding the incidence of prostitution in society.

There are references to acts of self-immolation in the Periyapurānam. Self-immolation was practised from early times in the Tamil country, the motive being sometimes

86 3873

87 3901-3902.

88 183-198.

89 838.

90 There are inscriptional evidences to show the sale of slaves in the time of later Cholas in the 13th century. *A. R. E.*, 1905, p. 46., 499 of 1904, 502 of 1904.

91 364-366.

personal and sometimes spiritual.⁹² The well known practice called *Sati* where a woman burnt herself on the pyre of her husband was only one form of it. *Sati* seems to have originated from the frantic love which some widows cherished towards their husbands, and a repetition of the act in a few instances seems eventually to have grown into a practice.

When Pugaḷanār, father of Appar died, Māḍiniyār mother of Appar is also said to have died leaving behind their children and relatives. Even though it has not been expressly stated that Māḍiniyār committed self-immolation, it shows that married women felt severely the bereavement of their husbands and preferred to die.⁹³ Similarly Tilakavatiyār, sister of Appar also attempted to immolate herself when she heard the death of her fiancé but at the request of Appar, who had earlier lost his parents, she agreed to live and be guardian to him.⁹⁴

There are also instances of men putting an end to themselves when they had great attachment to persons or even to principles or ideas. Pugaḷchchōḷa Nayanar was a Chōḷa king whose capital was Uṇaiyūr. He was a pious devotee of Siva. During one of his royal visits he came to Karuvūr and while camping there numerous chieftains came and paid their tributes. The ministers reported to the king that a chieftain, by name Adihan, alone was refusing to pay tributes and remained turbulent and adamant. The king immediately ordered his ministers to capture him. There ensued a battle between the king's army and the chieftain's forces. After winning the battle the king's forces camp up to the king with the spoils which included severed heads of their enemies. When Pugaḷchchōḷa reviewed them he was shocked to see the head of a Siva's devotee with locks of hair. He repented for having caused the death of a devotee.

92 S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, "Self-immolation which is not *Sati*", *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XXXV, 1906, pp. 129-131.

93 1292-1293.

94 1297-1299.

So he abdicated the throne in favour of his son. Placing the severed head in a golden bowl, he carried it on his head and finally threw himself into a raging funeral pyre and committed self-immolation.⁹⁵

Regarding the burial customs of the Tamils we have some information in the Periyapurānam. When the Kaḷa-bhra king, who lived during the time of Mūrti Nayanar died, ministers immediately arranged for the funeral of the deceased king.⁹⁶ In Sambandar purāṇam there is reference to the custom of cremating bodies. There was a devotee by name Śivanēsan at Mailāppūr and he had only one daughter by name Pūm Pāvai. She died as a result of the bite of a venomous snake and her body was cremated. After cremation ashes and bones were gathered in an earthen pot. That earthen pot was placed in the chamber of the girl and was decorated with her rich garments and jewels. Regular rituals like lighting of lamps, holy bath, applying sandal and other incenses were performed and cooked rice mixed with milk was also served before the pot containing the ashes and bones.⁹⁷

95 3957-3981

96 994.

97 2963-2966.

Religion is an important aspect of human life. It has played a notable part in most of the civilisations known to man. In India religion has always been the basis of her thought and life. From the beginning it has been the guiding principle of her civilisation. She has firmly held to this principle against all odds down through the ages. Numerous sects and cults that originated in India are prevalent to-day. The people of India have adhered themselves to the sects and cults according to their temperaments—hereditary, environmental or intellectually preferential. Such is the religious texture in India. The average man in India identifies his heritage with these sects and cults and gets a sense of fulfilment.

History unfolds not only the antiquity of Indian Culture but also the continuity of its spiritual progress. Religion has been made the subject of vast experimentation in India. This ancient land has attempted to grapple at all times with ultimate problems, and this search after truth has been undertaken not by one race or one area, but by the whole population spread over the entire sub-continent.

India has been the meeting place of various religions. Her geographical position has enabled her to establish contact with both eastern and western countries, to receive from, as well as to transmit to other countries spiritual ideas and thereby to deepen and widen her own culture. The basic tendency of India towards understanding and accommodation is the result of an assimilative attitude of the people. In the synthesis of a nation-wide and country-

wide religious life, the contributions of different racial elements have so commingled that to-day it is difficult to separate them. Nevertheless there are certain distinctive features in the religions developed in each part of the country. South India has its own religious history which has run parallel to the developments in other parts of India.

There is no single religion in India but rather a combination of related religions, representing different facets of Hinduism, besides non-Hindu faiths such as Buddhism, Jainism, Islam and Christianity. Hinduism transcends any attempt at definition. It is not a creed like Christianity or Islam, and it can well be described as a group of religions with a fluctuating quantum of beliefs, opinions, usages, observances, religious and social ideas with a certain underlying principle, namely the acknowledgement of the authority of the Vedas.¹ Diversity is the very essence of Hinduism and its proper exhibition is the presence of various sects in its fold. Yet there is a fundamental unity which astonishingly has preserved Hinduism to this day. Saivism and Vaishnavism are the most important creeds of Hinduism. Saivism has many millions of followers. The Periyapurānam, being a biography of the devotees of Śiva, gives a detailed account of Saivism and its encounters with Jainism and Buddhism.

Saivism is the religion of those who see in Śiva the manifestation of the Supreme Being. It is not a single cult, but a federation of allied cults, whose practices range from the serenest form of personal life in the faith to the most passionate excesses that alienate one's sympathy for the cult. The concept of Śiva worship was known to have existed from even pre-historic times. From the findings of the Indus Valley ruins, Sir John Marshall has affirmed that the seals indicate the worship of Lord Śiva as Pauṣpati.²

- 1 A. Barth, *The Religions of India*, pp. 153-154, 288.
But there are some sects like the Līṅgāyats who completely rejected the authority of the Vedas, but yet remain within the Hindu fold.
- 2 A. L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, p. 23.

But scholars find it difficult to believe on the strength of a single roughly carved seal that all the specific attributes of Śiva, as Mahēśa, Mahāyogin, Paśupati and Dakṣiṇāmūrti were anticipated in the remote age to which the seal belongs.

The civilisation of the Āryans and their philosophical thought and religious practices in particular are revealed by the sacred books, collectively known as the Vedas. Though the name of Śiva hardly occurs in the Vedas, still His genesis can be traced to the hymns in the *Rig Veda*. At first the people who saw the power of the Omnipotent as something terrible and destructive, named Him Rudra. Subsequently prayers were offered to Rudra for the redress of suffering and also for conferring various benefits. There is nothing to indicate that the God was one who was always disposed to do evil, which could be averied only by praises and oblations. On the contrary, He was also the saviour God of the Vedic period.³

Rudra of the *Rig Veda* became Śiva, "the propitious", of the later period. In the *Atharva Veda*, Śiva is called Paśu Pati meaning Lord of Animals, thus forming a link between the Vedic Śiva and Śiva worship of later times. At the time of the *Yajur Veda* Śiva was worshipped by the *Kshatriyas* or the warrior class who admired the quality of might combined with fierceness. In the time of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Śiva worship became suffused with feeling of intense love influenced by the teaching of *Bhakti*. The *Mahābhārata* contains several passages attesting the spread of Śaivism and its increasing hold on society.⁴ The earliest coins bearing Śiva emblems, that is, the 'image of Śiva with trident in hand on the obverse and his bull on the reverse, are those of the Kushāns in the early centuries of Christian era. The flourishing condition of Śaivism under the Guptas is attested by the Mathura pillar inscription of Chandra Gupta II Vikramāditya (380 A. D).⁵

3 C. V. Narayana Aiyar, *Origin and Early history of Śaivism in South India*, pp. 2-4.

4 *Ibid.*, pp. 72-90.

5 D. A. Pai, *Monograph on the religious sects in India among the Hindus*, pp. 12-13.

In South India, Saivism is traceable from very early times. The earliest known Tamil literature goes by the name of the first *Saṅgam* works and it is from them that we get an idea of the religion of the Tamils. From *Tolkāppiyam*, which is a grammatical exposition of the Tamil language as it was in use in the days of the *Saṅgam*, we find that the Tamils were worshippers of the Gods 'Māyon' (Krishṇa), 'Sēyon' (Subrahmaṇya), 'Vāndan' (Indra) and 'Varuṇan'. So by the time that *Tolkāppiyam* came to be written, the Vedic Gods Indra and Varuṇa had come to be worshipped in the plains and in the coastal region. But no direct mention is made in *Tolkāppiyam* about Śiva.⁶

Coming to the period of the Third *Saṅgam* it is known that among the forty-five poets of the Tamil academy of the Pāṇḍya court, Nakkirar was an ardent worshipper of Śiva. The epithet 'Śiva' is not found in the Eight Anthologies and *Pattuppāṭṭu*. However Śiva is mentioned by such phrases as the rare sage with lowered locks of hair, the three-eyed Lord, the Lord with the throat of blue, the Lord having Pārvati (His consort) on His left (hermaphroditic), the One who rides the bull and the God under the banyan tree.⁷

The twin classics, the *Silappadikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai*, throw more light upon the development of different religious beliefs in South India. It is clear from them that there were a pretty large number of people who were devoted to Śiva. In Canto 26, line 54 to 67, it is stated that Seṅguṭṭuvan worshipped both Śiva and Viṣṇu. *Silappadikāram* mentions the 'pañchākshara' the five letters of *Namaśivāya* (XI 11 128-130). *Maṇimēkalai* mentions Saivism and Sivavādin (an expounder of Saivism) who expounded the doctrine of the eight forms of Īśvara and His presiding over creation and dissolution. From *Maṇimēkalai* it is found

6 M. Rajamanickam, *The Development of Saivism in South India*, pp. 9-10.

7 *Puranānūru*, vv. 1, 6, 55, 91, 166.
Kalittogai, vv. 6, 55.
Paripadal, v. 9.

that there were different forms of religion and philosophy current at that time.⁸

From a perusal of the *Saṅgam* literature, scholars infer that upto the close of the second century A. D. there does not seem to have been much of an opposition or intolerance among the votaries of the different religious groups in South India. Thus in the period preceding the age of the *Periāpurānam* Nayanmars there seem to have been absolute harmony among the different faiths in the Tamil country such as Saivism, Vaiṣṇavism, Jainism and Buddhism. But there are instances to show theological dialogues between the devotees of Hindu and Non-Hindu religions. They never resorted to such violence and wordy duels as happened in the period of the Nayanmars.⁹

Towards the close of the *Saṅgam* epoch the heterodox religions came to occupy a dominant position. Saivism for the time being staged a set back and slowly lost the support of the rulers and subjects. The revival was brought about by the *Bhakti* movement initiated by the Śaiva Nayanmars and Vaiṣṇava Ālṅkāras. The way the revival of Saivism was made possible by the Śaiva Nayanmars is well illustrated in the *Periāpurānam*.

An account of Saivism as revealed by the *Periāpurānam* that follows will include a discussion of the different sects in Saivism, worship of Śiva in various forms, His representation in the *Linga* form, myths related to Him, festivals held in His honour, pilgrimages to His shrines and the patterns of Devotion of the Nayanmars.

SECTS IN SAIVISM

One of the oldest and most widely spread cults is that of Śiva worship. It included many sects such as the Paśupatas, Kāpālikas, Bhairavas, Kālāmukas, Mahāvratins,

8 *Maṇimēkalai* - Kādai 27, 11. 86-95.

9 C. V. Narayana Aiyar, *Origin and early history of Saivism in South India*, p. 121.
M. Rajamanickam, *The Development of Saivism in South India*, pp. 20-21.

Sāktas, Kāshmir Śaivism and Līṅgāyats. Several of these sects had at different times attained considerable influence and patronage in Southern India. Though they do not differ much in the essentials of their teaching, they differ in their emphasis on some particular form or aspect of Śiva. There are references in the Periyapurāṇam to some of these sects and some of the Nayanmars belonged to one or other of these sects. It is interesting to study briefly these different sects in Śaivism.

One of the Periyapurāṇam Nayanmars, Rudra Paśupati Nāyanār belonged to the Paśupata sect. His name was Paśupati and since he used to recite 'Rudra' *mantra* he was called as Rudra Paśupati.¹⁰ Paśupatas believed that release from the cycle of birth can be obtained by prayer, praise and passionate devotion to Lord Śiva in the name of Paśupati—Lord of Creatures. 'Pati' is the Lord, and man is the 'Paśu' bound by the fetters of the world and who craves release by the grace of the Lord. Śiva in this aspect as Paśupati is referred to in the *Atharva Veda* and so this Paśupata sect may said to be the earliest one in India.¹¹ The followers of this sect smear ashes on the body, wear black garments and tie their hair into plaits. People of all classes were admitted to their fold. They practised self-torture to attain mystical ecstasy.¹² Rudra Paśupati Nayanar used to recite the 'Rudra' *mantra* by standing upto neck in a pond, which may not be possible for ordinary men. Lord Śiva was pleased at the sincere devotion of the Nayanar and granted him salvation.^{12a}

10 1033–34, 'Rudra' *mantra* is from the *Yajūr Veda*.

11 D. A. Pai, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

Pai is of the opinion that the Paśupata doctrine dates far anterior to Asōka for Asōka visited Nepal about 249 B. C. accompanied by his daughter Chārumati, "who had adopted a religious life and settled herself in a convent built in honour of Paśupatināth, about two miles north of Katmandu", p. 62.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 62.

12 a 1035–1038.

The Pāśupata sect was strong as early as the days of the Pallavas in South India. The Pāśupata sect that was prevalent in South India was called Lakuliṣa Pāśupata after the founder of this sub-sect Lakuliṣa. Lakuliṣa was considered to be an incarnation of Mahēśvara, the incarnation having taken place at Kāyāvarōhaṇa in Gujarat. The term Kāyāvarōhaṇa in its corrupt form 'Kārōhaṇa' was attached to the Pāśupata centres in the Tamil country, such as Nāgaikkārōṇam in Nāgappaṭṭinam and Kuṇḍaikkārōṇam in Kumbakōṇam.¹³ This is confirmed by the fact that the Tēvāram hymnists who have sung in praise of the Śiva temples at Kumbakōṇam, Nāgappaṭṭinam and a few other places have called them Kāyārōhaṇa' or 'Kārōṇa' in their hymns. Other important Pāśupata centres in the Tamil country are Kāñchi, Tiruvorīyur, Mayilāppūr and Koḷumbāḷūr.¹⁴

Kāpālikas are said to be a group among the Pāśupatas. They indulged in rites and ceremonies of a very revolting type and they worshipped Śiva in his fiercer aspect as Bhairava. In *Śiṟuttoṇḍa Nayanar Puranam*, Sekkilar gives a detailed description of a Bairava ascetic. *Śiṟuttoṇḍa Nayanar* was practising the virtue of giving food to all devotees of Śiva everyday and taking food only after they were fed. To test his piety Lord Śiva himself came to his place in the form of a Bairava saint. The Bairava had braided hair, a garland of 'Tumbai' flowers, sacred ashes on the forehead with a dot upon it, the ear-ring called 'rōḍu' in the ears, a neck-lace of crystal beads around the hip a cloth known as 'kañjugam', bangles made of bones on the arms and legs, a begging-bowl in the left hand, a trident and a small drum in the right hand.¹⁵ The Bairava ascetic wanted the Nayanar to serve human flesh as a dish. The Nayanar agreed to the demand and served human

13 1556, 2364, 3810, 3831-32, 2306, 2308.

14 T. V Mahalingam. "The Pāśupatas in South India" *Journal of Indian History*, 1949, pp. 44-46.
A. R. E., 1913, p. 86.

15 3685-94.

flesh.¹⁶ From this single incident it is not correct to generalise that all Bairavas took human flesh as part of their food. It is believed that they used to perform human sacrifices too.¹⁷ This only shows some of their violent and fierce aspects of life as ascetics.

Another sect closely identified with the Kāpālikas and Kālāmukas is the 'Mahāvratins' who observe the 'Mahāvratam' or the great vow.¹⁸ In the Periyapurānam, Sekkilar gives a detailed picture of a 'Mahāvratin' in Mānakkāñjaṇa Nayanar Purānam. The ascetic wore on his forehead three stripes of sacred ashes, on top of his tout a clip made of beads of bones, a pair of beads of bones as ear rings, round the neck a garland of beads of bones, on the shoulders an ornament known as 'Yōgappattigai', a cluster of hair as sacred thread, on the wrist a thread of beads of bones and a loin cloth with a small piece of wavering cloth of it.¹⁹

Another important Saiva sect was that of the Liṅgāyats or Virāṣaivas, founded in the middle of the 12th century in the southern Karnataka country under the leadership of Basava. Basava was the Prime Minister of Bijjala Kālacūri, king of Kalyāṇi. Basava completely rejected the Vedas and the authority of the brāhman class and formulated a priesthood known as the 'Jaṅgamas'.²⁰ Liṅgāyats regard Siva as the supreme God and offer worship to Him alone in the form of a small *Liṅga* deposited in a reliquary generally suspended around the neck. Their principal books are writings entitled *Purānas* in Kanarese language.²¹ It is worthy of note that in one of the *Purānas*—the *Basava*

16. 3709–10.

17. T. V. Mahalingam, *op. cit.*, p. 46.; D. A. Pai, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

18. The Kāpālikas are not much different from the Kālāmukas who also worshipped Siva in His Bairava aspect. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. XI, p. 93.

19. 886–891.

20. A. L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, p. 335.

21. The Kanarese sermons are known as *Vachana*.

Purāṇa – are included accounts of the Periyapurānam Nayanmars of the Tamil country.

RITUALS

Ritual is the art of religion and every religion has its own rituals, symbols and myths. The Hindu rituals are of two kinds, namely Vedic and Āgamic. The Vedic rituals are of the nature of sacrifices to the Gods. The Āgamic rites are mainly connected with the worship of idols. We have different Āgamas for the different parts of India giving details about the construction of temples, installation of idols, the modes of worship and other traditional religious activities.²²

Siva is mostly worshipped in the form of Liṅga in Śaiva temples. The rituals to the idol go by the name ‘*Archchanai*’ or ‘*pūja*’.²³ The rituals are performed by priests who are a class by themselves and are known by the terms ‘*Gurukkal*’ or ‘*Archakar*’. The presiding deity is treated like earthly monarchs and dignitaries and the rituals are just a replica of the services that are usually rendered to a beloved guest or an honoured king. From dawn to midnight rituals are performed strictly in accordance with the prescription given in the Āgamas. There are innumerable references to these rituals in the Periyapurānam.

Sekkilar with all humility and reverence extolls the greatness of the priests who perform *Pūja* thrice a day, in the “Muppōdum Tirumāni Tiṇḍuvār Purāṇam”. Nambi Āṇḍār Nambi in his *Tiruttonḍar Tiru Andādi* hails the

21 The Kanarese sermons are known as *Vachana*.

22 T. M. P. Mahadevan, *Outlines of Hinduism*, p. 40.

23 The term *Pūja* denoting rituals is said to have derived from the Sanskrit verbal root ‘*pūj*’ (*pūja yāti*) J. Charpentier, “The meaning and etymology of ‘*Pūja*’”, *I. A.*, Vol. 56, 1927, p. 98.

But some scholars trace the origin of the word ‘*Pūja*’ to the Tamil word ‘*pūci*’ meaning to offer flowers. Chintaharan Chakravarti “Meaning and etymology of *Pūja*”, *I. A.*, Vol. 57, 1928, p. 140.

priests as those who perform *Pūja* thrice a day according to the knowledge they had gained from the *Āgamas*.²⁴ Therefore it is certain that *Āgamic* worship was in vogue in the time of the Nayanmars.

There are three kinds of *Pūja* meant for three different occasions namely *Nitya Pūja* or daily rituals, *Naimittiga Pūja* or rituals on festival days and *Kāmiya Pūja* or rituals performed by individuals in fulfilment of vows taken by them.²⁵ The details found in the Periyapurānam are of *Nitya Pūja* or daily rituals which is further divided into three classifications on the basis of the number of times *Pūja* is performed each day. They are *Uttamam*, *Maddimam* and *Adamam*.²⁶ *Uttamam* denotes the performance of *Pūja* eight times a day. *Maddimam* denotes the performance of *Pūja* four times a day. *Adamam* denotes the performance of *Pūja* three or two times a day. In majority of the temples *Pūja* is performed three times a day. That may be the reason for Sekkilar calling the priests as “Muppōdum Tirumēni Tiṇḍuvār” or persons touching (and performing rituals too) the idols thrice (a day). In some of the temples owing to lack of funds only two times *Pūja* is performed.

Pūja in Siva temples consists of sixteen parts and the details as given in the *Āgamas* are as follows :— 1. *Ācānam* (offering a seat), 2. *Āvāhanam* (presence of the deity is invoked), 3. *Tāpanam* (fixing and consecrating the idol), 4. *Sannidānam* (entrance of divine spirit), 5. *Sannirōdanam* (circumscribing the idol to a particular place), 6. *Pādyam* (the feet are washed), 7. *Āsamanam* (sipping, while uttering certain *mantras* a little water three times), 8. *Arkkiam* (offering water reverentially), 9. *Abhishēkam* (bathing the idol), 10. *Vastiravēshdanam* (dressing the idol), 11. *Kandam* (offering sandal paste), 12. *Aṅgabhūṣaṇam* (decorating with ornaments), 13. *Pushpam* (offering of flowers), 14. *Dhūpa-dīpa* (burning of incense and camphor), 15. *Naivēdya* (offering food) and 16. *Bali* (sacrifice or

24 v. 74.

25 M. V. M., Nagaraja Gurukkal, “Tirukkōil vaḷi pātu muṟai”, *Tirukkōil*, 1963, p. 83.

26 *Ibid*, pp. 84-87.

offering to deity).²⁷ Of these rituals the principal ceremonies are those of *abhishēka*, *dhūpa-dīpa*, and *naivēdya*. The Periyapurānam contains innumerable references to these details in the lives of various Nayanmars.

The *abhishēka* or the ceremonial bath to the deity consisted of holy water, milk, honey, oil, cocoanut water, sandal paste, scented rose water and *Pañchāmritam*—a kind of dessert of fruits. Śivakoṣariyar performed *abhishēka* in the traditional way to the *Liṅga* at Kāḷatti hill.²⁸ Saṅḍēśura Nayanar, who obtained abundant milk from the cows which he tendered, performed *abhishēka* to the *Liṅga* with milk.²⁹ Tirunilanakka Nayanar performed *Pūja* strictly in accordance with Āgamic rules, to the deity in the Ayavandi temple at Sāttamaṅgai. His wife also helped him in performing *Pūja* to the deity.³⁰ This shows that women also took an active part in the rituals of the day. So also the wife of Tāya Nayanar (Arivāṭṭāya Nayanar) accompanied the Nayanar to perform rituals in the temple at Gaṇamaṅgalam.³¹

Abishēka was followed by dressing the idol and decorating the deity with permitted flowers. In the Eṇipatta Nayanar Purānam Sekkilar gives the rules to be observed while plucking flowers for the offering to deity. One should get up before dawn, have a clean bath, tie a piece of cloth around the mouth to avoid pollution and then go to the *Nandavanam* or the flower garden and pluck suitable flowers for the Lord. The flowers should be gathered in a basket meant for that purpose and the basket itself should be carried by means of a stick³². Muruga Nayanar is said to have gathered four varieties of flowers—flowers

27 M. V. M., Nagaraja Gurukkal, "Āgamakklai", *Tirukoil*, July 1963, p. 465.

28 758, 784, 788

29 1025, 3379, 4123, 4100.

30 1833, 1835.

31 916.

32 559–560, 1023, 1238.

from trees, from plants, from creepers and from water plants. For making garlands out of these flowers there were separate maṇḍapas or halls in temples.³³

Then came the application of incense and lighting camphor. One of the sixty-three Nayanmars by name Kalaya Nayanar did the service of applying Kuṅkiliyam—a kind of incense made from the gum of a tree (*Tripterocarp dammar*) at the Śiṣa temple at Tirukkaḍavūr. So he came to be called as Kuṅgiliyakkalaya Nayanar.³⁴ Mūrti Nayanar devoted his life to the preparation of sandal paste for the anointing of the Lord at Madurai.³⁵

Naivēdya or the food offering with recitation of mantras was the last part of the Pūja and the food consisted of rice products made specially at a cooking house within the temple precincts (Maḍappaḷḷi) by a special class of cooks known as Parichchāraka. Some of the Periyapurānam Nayanmars prepared food in their houses, took them to the temple in their locality and offered it to the deity. Tāya Nayanar of Gaṇamaṅgalam used to offer daily the deity at Taṇḍalai Nineri, rice cooked of a special variety of paddy known 'Sennel' along with greens and tender mango.³⁶ Another important item offered to the Lord Śiṣa at temples is the 'Pañchakaviyam' (Sanskrit) or in Tamil 'Āvinaindu'.³⁷ It is a combination of five things obtained from cow. The five things are milk, curd, ghee, cow's urine and cowdung. The quantity of each product to be mixed is laid down in the Āgamas. The proportion is given in an inscription at Tiruvaṇṇāmalai.³⁸ It might look strange that cow's urine and cowdung should constitute parts of the offering to the Lord. Some scholars are of the opinion that the five products obtained from the cow are as follows:— milk,

33 1025, 3379, 4123, 4100.

34 835 – 836.

35 977.

36 908, 916.

37 916, 1032, 2866.

38 *S. I. I.*, Vol. 8, 1932, No. 66 p. 34.

curd, ghee, butter-milk and butter.³⁹ They substitute butter-milk and butter to cow's urine and cowdung. This seems to be acceptable for there are references in the *Tēvāram* hymns to support this view.⁴⁰

It is also interesting to note how Kaṇṇappa Nayanar, imitating the familiar procedures of the priest, performed *Pūja* to the *Liṅga* at the top of the Kaḷatti hill. The Nayanar prepared pork as *Neivēdya*, took water in his mouth for *abhishēka* and carried the flowers clipped in the hair of his head. On reaching the top of the hill, Kaṇṇappar removed the old flowers with his feet performed the *abhishēka* by spitting the water and decorated the *Liṅga* with the flowers he carried. He then offered the tasty pork which he had selected by tasting them earlier.⁴¹ All these are acts of pollution according to the *Āgamic* rites. Animal flesh should not be offered as *Neivēdya*. So also water for the *abhishēka* should be carried in a clean vessel and also no one should smell or wear the flowers intended for the Lord.⁴² Being a hunter Kaṇṇappa Nayanar never knew this sophistication. He had just observed earlier the rituals performed by Sivakōsariyār, strictly in accordance with the *Āgamic* rules. He repeated them in his own way. Yet Lord Siva accepted the offerings of Kaṇṇappa Nayanar, being moved by His devotee's sincerity and love, and thereby wanted to elevate the concept of *Bhakti* above all other forms of worship.⁴³

39 A. Chidambaranar, "Ānaindu", S. T. S. Vol. XV. 1936-37. pp 287-391.

40 Appar-Kaḍavūr Virattānam hymn No. 9.
- Appāmalai hymn No. 9.
Sambandar-Ārūr hymn. No. 2

41 766, 767, 770, 771, 784, 785, 786, 801.

42 Seruttuṇai Nayanar cut the nose of a queen when she took a flower meant for Lord and smelled it. The queen's husband Kāḷaṟsiṅga Nayanar - one of the sixty-three Nayanmars, later cut her hand itself for having touched the flower meant for *Pūja*. Eṟipatta Nayanar slew the royal Elephant when it snatched the flower basket meant for Lord from a devotee.

43 805-807.

Special mention should be made of the rituals followed by the tribal people for which there is reference in the Kaṇṇappa Nayanar Puranam. The parents of Kaṇṇappa Nayanar were for long childless. So they prayed for a child to Lord Muruga and performed special rituals to Him. Peacocks and cocks, which are sacred animals to Lord Muruga, were left unharmed and allowed complete freedom. Animal sacrifices were also made in honour of the Lord accompanied by tribal dances.⁴⁴ The Lord was pleased and he pleased them with a son. When Kaṇṇappa Nayanar's father passed on the tribal leadership to Kaṇṇappa Nayanar, that occasion also was marked by sacrifices to invoke the blessings of the God.⁴⁵ The sacrifices were conducted by a priestess who is known by the term '*Dēvarāṭṭi*'.⁴⁶

FESTIVALS AND RELIGION

Certain moments and periods of time by association with memorable events and holy persons become sacred and are observed as festivals. The advent of seasons also was marked by appropriate celebrations. Festivals serve many and diverse purposes. They give an opportunity for the display of unbounded charities in the name of hospitality. They are periods of rest and enjoyment in the lives of many and are a relief from their monotonous daily routine. Whatever the origin of the festivals may be they are predominantly religious in character and significance. They commemorate the glory of God who puts down evil and enables good to prevail. The one purpose that runs through all the festivals is to create a spiritual climate for the people, a climate in which they could find their spiritual health and cultivate their soul. In the Periyapurānam there are references to the following festivals :— *Tiruvādirai*, *Māmagam*, *Paṅguni Uttiram*, *Vasanta Viḷā* and *Mahānavami*.

44 659-662.

45 699.

46 696-769.

Appar and Sambandar give glowing descriptions of the *Tiruvādirai* festival at Tiruvārūr.⁴⁷ *Tiruvādirai* festival is popularly known in the Tamil country as 'Ārudra'. It is observed in the month of 'Mārgasira' called also 'Mārgaḷi' corresponding to the English month December-January, when the Asterism 'Ārudra' (Orionis) holds sway. The occasion is one specially favourable to propitiate the dancing aspect of Śiva by worshipping Him. The asterism going by the name 'Ārudra' has for its presiding deity 'Rudra', symbolising the destructive force in the universe.⁴⁸

Narasīṅga Munaiyaraya Nayanar, the chieftain of Tirumunaippāḍi Nāḍu, distributed one hundred gold coins to every devotee of Śiva every year on the *Tiruvādirai* festival day and also sumptuously fed all the devotees.⁴⁹ It was on this auspicious *Thiruvādirai* day that Sambandar was born at Sirkāḷi.⁵⁰

Sekkilar in narrating Sambandar's visit to the Śiva temples situated in Kumbakōṇam, mentions the sacredness of the Māmaha tank and the Māmaha festival connected with it.⁵¹ *Māsi Maha* festival is observed in the month of 'Magha', called in Tamil 'Māsi', corresponding to the English months February-March, on a day when the asterism 'Magha' (Leonis) holds sway. The day of observance of this festival will generally be the full-moon day of the month of 'Magha' or 'Māsi'. Though the asterism 'Magham' recurs every month, that occurring in the month of Māsi is considered specially important. Further the *Māmaham* festival celebrated once in twelve years is considered to be a festival par excellence.⁵²

The place considered as the most sacred and important for the observance of this festival in the Tamil country is

47 1499-1500, 1834, 2393. Appar *Tēvārār* IV-21.

Sundarar *Tēvāram* II-183-4.

48 P. V. Jagadeesa Aiyar, *South Indian Festivals*, p. 159.

49 3986-3987.

50 1920.

51 2307.

52 P. V. Jagadeesa Aiyar, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-41.

Māmaha tank in Kumbakōṇam. Nine rivers are considered by the people to be most sacred in India and they are Ganges, Jumna, Gōdāvari, Sarasvati, Narmada, Kāviri, Kumari, Payoshni and Sarayu. The waters of all these nine rivers are said to be present in the Māmaha tank at Kumbakōṇam on this festive occasion. Pilgrims from different parts of India flock thither to bathe in the sacred tank and get purified.

The *Paṅguni Uttiram* (festival) was celebrated with great eclat at Tiruvārūr in the time of Sundarar.⁵³ *Paṅguni Uttiram* falls on the full-moon day in the month of 'Phālguna' called also in Tamil 'Paṅguni' (March – April). The moon is then in the asterism 'Uttira' (Beta Leonis) and therefore the day is considered to be specially favourable for the worship of Śiva and consequently is dedicated for that purpose. This festival is otherwise known as 'Kalyāṇa Vrata', for the reason that the Goddess Minākshi is said to have wedded God Sundarēśa at Madurai on such a day. The Paṅguni Uttiram day is supposed to mark the end of winter and the beginning of summer.⁵⁴

At Tiruvārūr the *Paṅguni Uttiram* celebrations took place for forty-eight days preceding the *Paṅguni Uttiram* day. On this day Lord Tyāgarāja was taken out in procession in the temple car. Separate rituals were also performed for other deities such as Vināyagar, Subrahmaṇyar, Saṇḍēśurar and Chandrēkarar. Sundarar and his wife Paravaiyār fed the devotees who came to attend the festival and also gave them gifts in the form of gold coins.⁵⁵

Vasanta Viḷā was celebrated with great eclat at Tiruvārūr in the time of Sundarar.⁵⁶ This festival was held in the months April–May.

There is reference to *Mahānavami* in the Pugaḷ Chōḷa Nayanar puranam. The Chōḷa king who had his capital at

53 3497.

54 P. V. Jagadeesa Aiyar, *op. cit.*, pp. 59–61.

55 3200. C. K. Subramania Mudaliar, *Periyapuranam*, Vol. VI. p. 40.

56 3424.

Uṛaiyūr was camping at Karūr an important city in the Chōḷa country, during the *Navarātri* and *Mahānavami* celebrations.⁵⁷ *Navarātri* or the Holy Nine Nights is a period of festivity observed by the Hindus for nine days or rather nights after sunset in temples in the month of Puraṭṭāsi corresponding to the English month September–October, commencing on the first day in the bright fortnight of the month every year. The ninth day is known as '*Mahānavami*'.⁵⁸ Hindu kings used to celebrate this festival in a splendid manner in their palaces and on the *Mahānavami* day they went in a colourful procession around the capital city.

The fact that kings took part in many of the religious festivals is well attested by inscriptions. They also provided endowments for the performance of special rituals and for enacting dramas to entertain the people on festival days.⁵⁹

PILGRIMAGES – AN ESSENTIAL PART OF RELIGION

Pilgrimage to places of worship forms an important item of the spiritual discipline of the religious minded people. The Hindus have to their credit the largest number of pilgrim centres in India and it speaks highly of the spiritual bent of the Indian mind. Neither idle curiosity nor blind faith can account for this unique phenomenon, for most of the pilgrims have to undertake long journeys involving much physical discomfort and heavy expenses. A visit to holy places gives a fresh stimulus, especially as it brings them into contact with many devout minds and helps to awaken a sympathetic response in them.

Pilgrimage is one of the causes that have contributed to the catholicity of Hinduism, for it gave an opportunity

57 561.

58 The day next to the *Mahānavami* day goes by the name Vijayadasami when the initiation ceremony of learning for children is celebrated. Therefore this festival is also known as the '*Dasara*' festival.

59 368 of 1911, 371 of 1912, 122 of 1928–29, 371 of 1911, 164 of 1894, 90, 94 of 1931–32, 211 of 1912, 208 of 1901.

to men of different faiths to mix intimately with one another and learn to appreciate the value and beauty of one another's creed. Many pilgrim centres developed into great seats of higher learning. It is quite natural that in a place where there is a continuous stream of pilgrims throughout the year, there will be a great opportunity for commercial enterprise. Architecture, sculpture and painting received ample encouragement from pilgrimage.⁶⁰

Sekkilar gives a detailed account of all the pilgrimages undertaken by the three *Tēvāram* hymnists – Sambandar, Appar and Sundarar. Besides these three hymnists, other Nayanmars like Kāraikkāl Ammaiyaṛ, Aiyāḍigaḷ Kāḍavar-kōn and Chēramān Perumāḷ Nayanar also went on pilgrimage to different shrines located within and outside the Tamil country.

Sambandar got enlightened at Sirkāḷi, his birth place, by the Grace of God when he was just three years old.⁶¹ From that time onwards till he attained bliss at the age of fourteen he went on pilgrimage to different places in the Tamil country. As a child he was carried on the shoulders by his father. Latter seeing the difficulties encountered by the young devotee Lord Śiva blessed him with a palanquin for travel.⁶² In the course of his pilgrimages he performed many miracles for the benefit of the devotees of Śiva. Though Sambandar did not visit the Śiva shrines beyond the Tamil country such as Tirukkōṇamalai and Tirukkēdich-charam in Ceylon and Kailāyam, Kēdāram, Paruppadam Indranilapparuppadam and Kōkarṇam in Northern India but still he worshipped those temples, at heart and has left hymns composed in praise of them.⁶³ Of the three *Tēvāram* hymnists, Sambandar visited the largest number of shrines and has also left hymns in honour of 219 shrines located in different parts of the Tamil country and outside it.

60 *Cultural heritage of India*, Vol. IV, pp. 495–502.

61 1967–69.

62 2290–93.

63 2924–25.

Appar commenced his pilgrim activities only after his return to the Saiva fold from Jainism. Like his contemporary Sambandar, Appar also toured extensively and in the course of their pilgrimage they met more than once and visited certain shrines together. Appar went to Kailās in person to receive the blessings of Lord Śiva.⁶⁴ Appar has left hymns in honour of 125 shrines.

Sundarar went on pilgrimage from the time when his marriage was stopped by Lord Śiva's intervention at Tiruveṇṇainallūr.⁶⁵ He also toured extensively and eighty-three shrines have been honoured in song. Chēramān Perumāḷ Nayanar was his contemporary and both of them together visited many shrines. When Sundarar heard the Divine Inner call to reach Kailās, he immediately left on a white elephant and he was closely followed by Chēramān Perumāḷ on horse back.⁶⁶

The Chēra king Chēramān Perumāḷ Nayanar come from the Chēra country to worship Lord Naṭarāja at Tillai (Chidambaram) and commemorated his visit by composing *Ponvaṇṇattiruvandādi*.⁶⁷ From Tillai he proceeded to Tiruvārūr, met Sundarar and composed the *Tiruvārūr Tirumummaṇikkōvai*.⁶⁸ Chēramān Perumāḷ Nayanar along with Sundarar then visited the various shrines in the Pāṇḍya country. At the invitation of the former the latter visited the Chēra country.⁶⁹

The fact that kings also went on pilgrimage is proved by Aiyaḍigaḷ Kāḍavarkōn Nayanar's visit to various shrines after renouncing the throne. He also commemorated his visit to the shrines by composing a hymn for each shrine and the collection of them go by the name *Kshēttira-t-tiruveṇbā*.⁷⁰

64 1615-34.

65 212-219.

66 4262-63.

67 3800-03.

68 3807-16.

69 3828-90.

70 4049-51.

Kāraikkāl Ammaiṃ after renouncing this world went on pilgrimage to Kailās, and this shows that women also were keen in visiting sacred centres.⁷¹ Similarly queen Maṅgayarkkarasiyār also accompanied the king Ninṛa Sir Neḍumāran and minister Kulachchirai Nayanar when they went on pilgrimage along with Sambandar to the various shrines in the Pāṇḍya country.⁷²

Thus pilgrimage to sacred places formed an important item of the spiritual discipline of the Tamils. The pilgrimages undertaken by the three *Tēvāram* hymnists throughout the length and breadth of the Tamil country speaks of their sincere efforts to rejuvenate Śaivism from the onslaughts of Jainism and Buddhism. This will be seen by a study of the contents of the *Tēvāram* hymns where there are frequent denunciations of Jainism in particular. As said earlier pilgrimages contributed much to the catholicity of Śaivism, for People of different castes got an opportunity to mix intimately, dine together and live under the same roof. Tirunilakaṇṭa Yāḷppāṇar and his wife Maḍaṅgasūḷamaṇi, who belonged to the *Pāṇar* caste were invited to travel and live with Sambandar. Visits to minor shrines by the hymnists gave importance and prominence to them and many pious people came forward to establish endowments, as will be seen in inscriptions, to sing the *Tēvāram* hymns.

PHILOSOPHY OF ŚAIVISM

Śaivism has its ritualistic as well as philosophic aspects. Of the works in Tamil on Śaivism, the most valuable are the Twelve *Tirumuṟais* (the twelfth being the *Periyapurānam*) and the Fourteen *Meykaṇḍa Śāstras*.⁷³ Tenets of Śaivism are interspersed in the *Tirumuṟais* while the *Meykaṇḍa Śāstras* give a systematised and logical account of Śaiva

71 1769-77.

72 2781-93.

73 The authors of the *Tirumuṟais* are known as *Śaiva Samaya Āchāryas*.

The authors of the *Śāstras* are known as *Santāna Āchāryas*.

Philosophy. The Saiva Philosophy or *Saiva Siddhānta* teaches men to lead a virtuous life which will ultimately give them the delight of union with the Divine after the purgation of sins.

Of all the Twelve *Tirumūraṣ* and the Fourteen *Sāstras*, Tirumūlar's *Tirumandiram* is the earliest and it is only here the first mention of the expression '*Saiva Siddhānta*' is made.⁷⁴ The same expression is heard of again only in the inscription of Rājasimha Pallava of the 7th century in the Kailāsanātha temple in Kāñchi.⁷⁵ Rājasimha takes pride in announcing himself as possessing a knowledge of '*Saiva Siddhāntam*'. *Saiva Siddhāntam* is claimed to be the essence of the *Saiva Āgamas* and as the final conclusion of all conclusive truths of Saivism.

Sekkilar (A. D. 1137-1150) lived before the time of the authors of the fourteen *Saiva Siddhānta Sāstras*. Meykaṇḍār's "*Sivānābōdam*" is considered to be the first basic treatise of *Saiva Siddhānta*. It was later elaborately expounded by Meykaṇḍār's disciple, Aruṇandi Sivāchchārya

Name of the work	Author	Date
Tiru-Vundiyaṛ	Tiruviyālūr Uyyavanda	
	Tēvar	A. D. 1148
Tirukkaḷiṟṟu- paḍiyaṛ	Tirukkaḍavūr Uyyavanda	
	Tēvar	A. D. 1178
Sivānābōdam	Meikaṇḍa Tēvar	A. D. 1223
Sivānānasiddiār	Aruṇandi Sivāchchāriyār	A. D. 1253
Irupa Irupahtu	Aruṇandi Sivāchchāriyār	A. D. 1253
Uṇmai Viḷakkam	Tiruvadigai Maṇavāsagam- Kaḍantār	A. D. 1255
Sivapprakāsam	Umāpati Sivāchchāriyār	A. D. 1306
Tiruvārutpayan	"	"
Vinā Veṇba	"	"
Pōrriṭṭi Pahṟōḍai	"	"
Koḍikkavi	"	"
Neṇḷu Viḍu Tūtu	"	"
Uṇmai Neṇi Viḷakkam	"	"
Saṅgaṟpa Nirākaraṇam	"	"

74 Verse No. 1421.

75 S. I. I., Vol. I, Nos. 24-25.

in his "*Śivañāna Siddiyār*". Uyyavanda Tēvar's "*Tiruvuntīār*" and Tirukkaḍavūr Uyyavanda Tēvar's "*Tirukkalīṟruppaḍiyār*" were written in the years immediately after Sekkilar but before Meykaṇḍār. Sekkilar, as will be seen in the following pages, refers to most of the concepts of *Śaiva Siddhānta* in his *Periyapurāṇam* and this shows that the concepts were widely known to scholars. But Tirumūlar's (A. D. 5th century) *Tirumandiram* preceded all these works, and the concepts are also widely referred to in earlier Tamil works like the *Tēvāram* and *Tiruvāsagam*.⁷⁶

Tirumūlar, the author of *Tirumandiram* is one of the sixty-three Nayanmars and Sekkilar has given a clear account of his life and devotion.⁷⁷ A brief analysis of the subject-matter of Tirumūlar's *Tirumandiram* helps us to know something of the religious thought prevalent in the Tamil country in the days of Tirumūlar.⁷⁸ The three thousand stanzas are divided into nine *Tantras* and an introduction or *Pāyiram* as it is called. The first *Tantra* begins with an *Upadēsam* or teaching which enumerates certain rules of ethics, morality and religion. The second *Tantra* gives in a nutshell some accounts found in the *Śaiva Purāṇas* and the *Itihāsas*. It also explains the five-fold functions of creation, preservation, destruction, concealment and blessing. The third *Tantra* is an exposition of *Yōga* as conceived by Tirumūlar. The fourth *Tantra* likewise is a practical exposition of the *Mantra Śāstra* or the *Upāsana Mārga* and it is on the whole esoteric. The fifth

76 "... the concept of *Kandaḷi* (the boundless on the unbounded), spoken of the earliest extant Tamil work, the *Tolkāppiyam*, is rich in its implication. The Boundless (God or *Patī*) implies the bound (the souls-*pasu*) and the bonds (*pāsa*) the three categories spoken of by the *Siddhāntin*" – V. A. Devasenapathy, "Meykaṇḍār", *Indian Philosophical Congress Thirty-eighth session souvenir*, p. 35

77 3564–91.

78 A detailed account of the contents of *Tirumandiram* is found in C. V. Narayana Iyer's *Origin and early history of Śaivism in South India*, pp 229–236.

Tantra is much more intelligible than the previous *Tantras* and we get a general description of the different forms of Saivism. The sixth *Tantra* is perhaps the most useful part of the treatise for common man. It deals in simple terms with the ways and means of realising God. The seventh *Tantra* gives a description of the six *Cakras* or *Ādhāras* and the six *Liṅgas* and also of the special grace shown to Tirumūlar and the illumination he had thereby. It concludes with an appeal to people to follow the true path and gain knowledge. The eighth *Tantra* deals with some of the fundamental teachings of all forms of *Saiva Siddhānta* and with subjects like truthfulness, conquest of desire, cultivation of devotion and aiming at liberation and purification. The ninth *Tantra* describes the different kinds of divine dances and also of the Divine bliss attained by people like Tirumūlar himself. The book concludes with some praises of God and a description of the All-Pervading.

Saiva Siddhānta postulates three distinct and separate entities – ‘*Paṭi*’ meaning God, ‘*Paśu*’ meaning Soul and ‘*Pāśa*’ meaning Bonds as co-existent and eternal, the soul and Bonds being energised by God. These basic concepts of *Saiva Siddhānta* are widely interspersed throughout the Periyapurānam.

PATI

The concept of God in *Saiva Siddhānta* is sublime. It affirms God’s omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence. It affirms clearly His self-existence, immaculate purity, wisdom and infinite bliss. Sekkilar speaks of Him as “Immeasurable” by human beings.⁷⁹ *Śivañānabōdam* defines God as ‘*Sat-Cit*’. ‘*Sat*’ denotes Pure Being, ‘*Cit*’ denotes intelligence. ‘*Sat*’ is the Sun which we can never comprehend, ‘*Cit*’ is the light, one ray of which is enough to remove our darkness and but for that one ray of light we can never know the Sun.

Saiva Siddhānta postulates the unlimited ascendancy of *Paṭi* over *Paśu* and *Pāśa*. *Paṭi* energises both *Paśu* and

Pāsa and is their guiding principle. When *Paśu* – the soul gets out of *Pāsa*, it leans on *Pati* – God, who, by His grace receives it.⁸⁰

PASU

Soul is an entity which cannot be apprehended by the senses. It is only inferentially that its existence can be proved. The Soul is not the material body, with which it is united. The body only enables the understanding to shine better. The Soul is intelligent.

Souls are countless, eternal and sunk in spiritual darkness. By the grace of God, they take up bodies suited to work out their two fold *karmic* tendencies – good and evil and are born as lower and higher beings. So long as the soul is in the meshes of *Āṇava* it becomes subject to successive births and deaths enjoying the fruits of good and evil *karma*.⁸¹ When the season arrives for the dissolution of the dark bond affecting the soul, the Light of Grace dawns on the soul, and darkness is dispelled. Then the *mala*-freed-souls reach the Feet of Providence.

All the Nayanmars of the Periyapurānam are believed to have received the Grace in one form or another. The means adopted by them are different.

PASA

Pāsa is the bondage which binds the soul to worldliness. *Pāsa* is also called *Malam*.⁸² *Pāsa* is generally divided into *Āṇava*, *Māya* and *Karma*. *Āṇava* which obstructs the omniscience of the souls is known as *pratibandha*; *Māya* which limits the pervasiveness of the soul is known as *Sambandha*; and *Karma* which ceaselessly follows the soul directing it towards enjoyment of wordly pleasures rather

80 375 – “Tannuḷait-tunniya yāvaiyun-tūymai seyvaḍu”
298 – “Pāsam vinaip-paṇṇaruppān”.
4054 – “Vinaiyin Kuḷivāyninṇemaiyeḍuttār”.

81 734 – “nilaviya iruvinaḷ valaiyiḍai nilai suḷalbavar
neṇiṣēr pulanuṇu mananiḍai taḍai seyda poṇikaḷinaḷa-
vuḷave.”

82 238. “mummai māmalaṅgaḷ.”

than towards the attainment of release is known as *anubhandha*. They bind the soul in different ways. However, while *Āṇava* is wholly inimical to the soul, *māya* and *karma* are only partially so because, used aright, these help in the soul's emancipation from bondage.⁸³

As said before it is *āṇava* which obstructs the omniscience of the souls. It blunts true intelligence and encourages egoism, pride and conceit in man. *Āṇava* would not spare any soul. From eternity *āṇava* has co-existed in the soul hiding the soul's inner light and will abide till the souls attain an attitude of indifference to the fruits of deeds. The evil that *āṇava* does to the soul is so staggering that without God's grace, the soul can never hope to overcome it.⁸⁴ *Āṇava* is like green rust – verdigris – on copper and fully hides the knowing faculty of the soul.⁸⁵ The screening power of God which operates behind this bond to loosen and finally dissolve it, is also formally styled one kind of bond. When the original bond is dissolved, this divine power shines forth in great grace and quickens the progress of the freed souls towards the feet of the supreme Being.

Āṇava is also known as *Mūla Mala* (root impurity) even though the three *Malas* are in beginningless union with the soul.⁸⁶ This means that *Āṇava* functions without any interruption and the other two do not function during cosmic rest. But *Āṇava* is subordinate to Him.

Māya is defined as pure and simple insentient matter, consisting of bodies, organs, worlds and objects of enjoyments created from the elements which were and are in existence from eternity. *Māya* unlike *āṇava* is a source of

83 V. A. Devasenapathy, *Of Human Bondage and Divine Grace*, p. 29.

84 149—"Tidaganṟu ulagam uyya"
298—"Pāsam vinaippaṟṟaruppān"

85 According to Sekkilar the Periyapurānam itself was composed to remove the darkness from among the people by enumerating the lives of the Nayamars. 10—"Mākkaḷ sindaiyuḷ sārndu ninṟa poṅgiya iruḷ".

86 4095. "Paḷavinai-vēr."

partial illumination and hence serves as a lamp to souls lost in the darkness of *āṇava*. If the products of *māya* are used for working out our salvation *māya* will not bind us. *Māya* binds only when its products are used for selfish and sensuous enjoyment.⁸⁷ In fact in order to get rid of *āṇava* and *karma* souls have to get embodied and undergo experience in the world. Hence the need for a material world, body and other things. *Māya* provides these. It is on account of the useful part that *Māya* plays in enabling souls to gain release that *Māya* is considered to be not wholly evil.⁸⁸ When the soul realises the ephemeral character of the pleasures derived from *māya* it receives freedom through Lord's Grace and enjoys eternal bliss at His Feet.⁸⁹

Karma means work or action. Doing of work in this material world is part of life's completeness. God makes the souls to eat the fruits of the *Karma* for them to gain experience and thereafter to renounce them.⁹⁰ Our thought, desire and action depend on our character. Any *Karma* or deed done with a sense of agency becomes bondage for the soul. If the soul claims a deed as its own, then it 'has' to experience the consequences of that deed. This does not mean that the soul should cultivate indifference to duty but it should continue doing its duty without caring for the fruits of its duties, considering itself no longer as an agent but as an instrument in God's hands. This was precisely the attitude of all the Periyapurāṇam Nayanmars who did their duty to the call of their conscience. Their single-minded devotion to God and service to humanity brought salvation to their souls. Even good must be done "because it is good" not for the pleasant consequences of that deed, likewise, what is bad must be avoided, not to escape the

87 38. "maiyaḷ māṇḍam"

88 V. A. Devasenapathy, *Of Human Bondage and Divine Grace*, pp. 35-36.

89 751 - "muḍivilā inbamāna anbu".

489 - "aruṭ kaḷal niḷal".

90 753 - "taṅgiya pāvattin munnaich-chaṛbu viṭṭakala".

evil consequences, but "because it is bad". Even if per chance, a bad deed were to lead to pleasant consequences it must still be avoided.

Having briefly seen the basic concepts of *Saiva Siddhānta* which are interspersed throughout the *Periappuranam* let us analyse some of the common characteristics of devotees to illustrate how they were exemplars of the *Saiva Siddhānta*. The *Periappuranam* states the common characteristics of the saints in memorable words. The following is a short summary of the description given in *Periappuranam*.

"Some of the devotees were sought out by the Lord to receive His grace; some, out of the love that filled their very being, felt divine thrill, some dedicated themselves to manual labour in the service of the Lord and, there were countless others, besides, these."

"They were as pure within as the sacred ash which adorned their body. Their spiritual radiance illuminated everything around them. Their greatness can hardly be described by words."

"They were unswerving in their devotion to the Lord even if the very elements behaved contrary to their nature. They pursued the path of steadfast love and were embodiments of all good qualities without the least blemish."

"Their (spiritual) wealth (unlike material wealth) was beyond the vicissitudes of loss and gain. They treated gold and potsherd alike (as useless). They worshipped because of the love that welled forth in them. They were of a heroic mould that cared not even for release"

"One can only bless their exalted state. How can one measure it and describe it?"⁹¹

EXTERNAL MARKS OF RELIGION

The sacred ashes and the *Rudrāksha* are the characteristic symbols of Siva. It is one of the essential doctrines of Saivism that worshippers of Siva should wear these symbols on their body. These symbols have rich

meaning behind them according to scholars and they cannot be equated with superstition.⁹² Some scholars are of the opinion that these religious marks were originally intended to distinguish the different castes and sects in society. Among Hindus the worshippers of Viṣṇu wear mainly on their forehead the trident shaped mark called 'Urdhva Puṇḍram' or vertical stripes and the worshippers of Śiva (Śaivas) wear three horizontal lines drawn across the forehead which is called *Triyak Puṇḍram*. Apart from these marks on the forehead some are also worn on various parts of the body, the number differing according to caste.⁹³

It is very difficult to find the origin of the custom of wearing the sacred ashes. It is probable that the custom might have spread from the Kāpālikas who, as said earlier besmear the body with sacred ashes. Śiva is believed, in His destructive aspect to have delighted in besmearing His body with the ashes of the dead in cremation grounds. Kāpālikas who worshipped Śiva in this aspect followed the same custom and in due course the custom might have been followed by other sects of Śaivism also in a refined manner.⁹⁴

The Periyapurāṇam includes in the list of nine groups of devotees, one group of devotees who are called "Muṇiṇṟu Pūṣiya Munivar" or 'those who have worn sacred ashes'.⁹⁵ Sekkilar clearly explains the three different methods of preparing the sacred ashes in the "Muṇiṇṟu Pūṣiya Munivar Puraṇam.". The three methods are namely 'Kalpa', 'Anukalpa' and 'Upakalpa'.

Kalpa method: The dung of the cows which have been reared in the temple for supply of milk to the rituals must

92 S. Sabaratna Mudaliar, *Essentials of Hinduism*, p. 267.

93 J. E. Padfield, "The Hindu Sacred Marks", *Madras Christian College Magazine*, Vol. III, 1885-86, pp. 816-817.

94 Thomas Foulkes, *A catechism of the Śaiva Religion*, pp. 73-74. The ashes worn by Śiva is called 'the eternal ashes' or 'the original ashes'.

95 4163-68.

be collected and made into a ball. This must be put into the fire specially created for the purpose before hand. When it has been burnt for a sufficient time, it must be removed and preserved in a new pot.

Anukalpa method : By this method the sacred ash is made of dry cowdung gathered in the fields, pounded, mingled with the urine of the cow, kneaded and put into the fire. Then it is collected and kept for use.

Upakalpa method : By this method common ash, such as that of fire wood, is moistened into a ball and cast into the fire maintained in Siva temples. Then it is gathered and kept for use. Sekkilar called the ashes prepared in these three methods as '*Karpaniṟu*', '*Anukarpaniṟu*' and '*Upakarpaniṟu*' respectively. Sekkilar also mentions the places and methods of wearing the sacred ash. They are worn on the head, forehead, the chest, the stomach, the knees and the back, the three horizontal stripes.⁹⁶

In Śaiva theology there is much philosophy behind the custom of wearing the sacred ashes. The sacred ashes represent the Grace of God that illumines a soul on the removal therefrom of its inherent impurity of *mala*. Fire has burnt the cowdung, removed its impurities and has changed it into a beautiful form. The cowdung (*Pasu malam*) is symbolical of the impurities in man *Pasu* being the name for soul as well as for cow and *Malam* being a name for ignorance in man and as well as for cowdung. When the *malam* that enveloped the soul is burnt by the fire of *Nānam* or pure wisdom, the Grace of God shines forth and this Grace is symbolised by the sacred ashes white in colour. The wearer is made to feel that the Grace of God is on him.⁹⁷

There are innumerable references in the Periyapurānam to the wearing of sacred ashes by the Nayanmars. Another

96 4167.

97 S. Sabaratna Mudaliar, *Essentials of Hinduism*, p. 268.

V. S. Ramalinga Mudaliyar "Tiruniṟu Aṇivādēn?", *Śiva Nēsan* Vol. 6, 1933, pp. 229-233.

popular and holy symbol of the Nayanmars, widely referred to in the Periyapuramam is the “*Rudrāksham*” which is obtained from a tree. This species of trees is found only in two places in India – the Himalayas and in Western Ghats. The tree is popular in South-East Asia, Australia and Pacific islands.⁹⁸ In Hindu mythology it is stated that this kind of tree took its root from the tears shed by Siva out of sympathy for His creatures. It is on this account that they are called ‘*Rudrākshas*’ for Rudra is one of the names of Siva and ‘*Aksha*’ means ‘eye’. The size of *Rudrāksha* varies; so also the number worn, depending on where it is worn. According to Saiva tradition it is said that one bead should be worn on the crown of the head; six beads on each ear; forty around the head; thirty-two on the neck; a hundred and eight on the chest; thirty-two on the arms and twenty-four in the hands.⁹⁹ The wearer of this in varying numbers is said to possess qualities of mercy and benevolence. The *Rudrāksha* beads are believed to have some medicinal qualities too.¹⁰⁰ Many Nayanmars attached much significance to these sacred marks and conceived the devotees of Siva with these marks as the personification of Lord Siva Himself.

MYTHS AND MIRACLES

The religious history of India in general and of the Tamil country in particular may be said to be the flowing cumulative stream of myths and miracles. Myths poetically and philosophically embody the tradition, values and aspirations of a people. These are conserved and transmitted by social memory and thus bind the present with the past-in belief, thought and action.

Myths are considered to be not mere tales and legends but sacred beliefs or truths because they are mostly related to Gods. The “purpose of myth is neither to rationalize

98 *Kalaikkalāṇḻiyam* (Tamil Encyclopaedia) Vol. II, p. 308.

99 Thomas Foulkes, *op. cit.*, P. 78.

100 Sivananayagi, “Tamiḻ moḻiyum, Siva neṇḻiyum” *Sentamiḻ* Vol. XI, pp. 105-106.

nature-worship nor to chronicle the racial past. Myth-making is essentially for the sake of conveying in concrete language – often veiled and highly symbolic – some abstract idea or truth”.¹⁰¹ Myths mostly have a transcendental use and one of the recurrent themes is that of the struggle between Good and Evil and the ultimate triumph of Good. In the Periyapurānam there are innumerable references to myths mostly related to Śiva. Some myths are associated with certain places and with the shrines located therein. It will be out of place to discuss the significance of various myths referred to in the Periyapurānam but nonetheless mention may be made of the myths related to Śiva.

Most of the myths of Śiva relate to His appearance. Śiva is said to have the river Ganges in His braided hair along with the crescent; He adorns His hair with ‘*Konṭai*’ flower, possesses a Third eye, holds in His hand a deer, an axe, a bow, a trident and fire, His throat is blue in colour, adorns His neck with a snake, keeps as His insignia a flag and the *Rishaba* retains His consort in His body, wears the four Vedas as His loin cloth, performs the Cosmic dance at Tillai, smears His body with holy ashes and clothes himself with the skin of elephant, tiger or deer.

Śiva is said to have performed ‘*Aṣṭāvirāṭṭam*’ or eight heroic acts at eight different places in the Tamil country. Śiva is said to have severed the head of Brahma at Tirukkaṇḍiyūr, burnt Andakāsura Tirukkōvalūr, burnt the Tripura at Tiruvadigai, severed the head of Takkan at Tirukkaruppariyālūr, killed Salandaran at Tiruviṭkuḍi, killed the wild elephant which came to Him and wore its skin at Tiruppaḷuvūr, burnt Manmatha at Tirukkoṟukkai and killed Yama in order to save Mārkkāṇḍeya at Tirukkaḍavūr. These heroic sports of Śiva and other myths related to Him are found in plenty in the Periyapurānam.

Miracles are narrations of the achievements of those advanced in spirituality and of various other religious activities. Miracles not only describe various spiritual acti-

101 T. M. P. Mahadevan, “Myth and Ritual in Hinduism”, *Journal of Madras University*, 1950, Vol. XXII, No. 1, Section A, p. 2.

vities in the material plane but they have their own peculiar method of describing such events. The popular mind associates miracles with sainthood. Manifestations of some super normal power is considered to be one of the qualifications of saints.¹⁰² It is true that in the case of some saints and of some of the Nayanmars such manifestations do occur. But the Nayanmars themselves do not set any value on such supernormal powers.¹⁰³ Thaumaturgy of the religious personalities like the Nayanmars of the Periyapurānam are of eight varieties and are referred to in Tamil literature as *Aṣṭamasiddhi*. They are namely 1. *Aṇima*, 2. *Mahima*, 3. *Lahima*, 4. *Karima*, 5. *Prāpti*, 6. *Prākāmiyam*, 7. *Vasittuvam*, and 8. *Isattuvam*.¹⁰⁴ Perumīla-laikkurumbā Nayanar is said to have acquired *Aṣṭamasiddhi*.¹⁰⁵

Aṇima denotes the miracle by which a person reduces his whole body to a mere invisible atom.

Mahima means the power to show the body in huge magnitude.

Lahima is the capacity to reduce the weight of the body and make it float in water. Appar is said to have performed this miracle when he was thrown into the sea after a stone has been tied round his body. He floated along with the stone and landed ashore safely.¹⁰⁶

Karima signified the power to increase the weight (without changing shape) of objects. The Lord Siva who came in the form of an ascetic did this miracle when he weighed His '*Kōvaṇam*' or loin cloth against all the household of Amarniti Nayanar.¹⁰⁷ Rudra Paśupati

102 *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. 8, p. 677.

103 T. M. P. Mahadevan, *Ten Saints of India*, p. 4.

104 E. M. Subramania Pillai, "Enperum Siddhikal"
Sen Tamiḷ Selvi, Vol. II, 1924-25, pp. 135-137.

Tiruvīlaiyādal Purāṇam, "Aṣṭamasitti upadēsitta-
paḍalam" 23-27.

105 1711.

106 1388-96.

107 530-545.

Nayanar is said to have submerged himself upto neck in water by making his body heavy and recite 'Rudra Mantra'.¹⁰⁸

Prāpti denotes the miracle by which a person can get at anything he desired in a split second. According to the Periyapurānam, Kāraikkāl Ammaiār by this miracle obtained two mango fruits when her husband demanded them in order to test her piety.¹⁰⁹

Prākāmiyam means the miraculous capacity to perform any action desired. By this miracle Kāraikkāl Ammaiār is said to have attained the shape of a demon and also walked upside down.¹¹⁰ Perumīlaikkuṟumba Nayanar is said to have realised earlier of the departure of his contemporary Sundarar to Kailās and he also desired to go to Kailās and did so by this miraculous power.¹¹¹

Vasittuvam means the miraculous capacity to convince others, by one's speech and also making them to think as one wants. The Lord Śiva who came in the form of an old ascetic and stopped Sundarar's wedding, was able to convince others that Sundarar was His slave.¹¹²

Isattuvam signifies the miraculous capacity of individual to perform the five acts of the Lord – namely Creation, Preservation, Destruction, Obscuration and Bestowal of Grace. Sambandar by possessing the miraculous power of creation is said to have brought to life Pūmpāvai at Mailāpūr.¹¹³ Similarly at Tirumarugal also Sambandar brought to life an young merchant when he died due to the bite of a poisonous snake.¹¹⁴ Sambandar by possessing the power of destruction is said to have caused the death of the Buddhist monk at Sāttamaṅgai.¹¹⁵ Sambandar bestowed

108 1035-39.

109 1732-47.

110 1766-71.

111 1713-15.

112 179-209.

113 2986-88.

114 2371-81.

115 2806-07.

grace on all those who attended his wedding at Tirunallūrperumaṇam.¹¹⁶ Sundarar also by his power of Creation brought to life the boy who was eaten by a crocodile at Avināsi.¹¹⁷ Appar similarly brought to life the eldest son of Appūdiyaḍigal Nayanar when he died bitten by a cobra.¹¹⁸ These are only a few of the innumerable miracles performed by the *Tēvāram* hymnists and the Nayanmars of the Periyapurānam.

TREE AND RIVER WORSHIP

All the sacred shrines dedicated to Siva in the Tamil country have a sacred tree known as '*Sthalavriksha*', within the precincts of the temple. The adoration of trees and plants, in virtue of the supernatural qualities or divine essence supposed to be inherent in them, is in vogue almost from time immemorial. Man in the beginning worshipped trees as Gods themselves. In due course the idea that trees might become the receptacle of the spirits of Gods dawned on him. So the tree was considered no longer as the body of the tree-spirit but merely as its abode. No object was placed under the tree to represent the deity for the tree itself was regarded as a huge natural temple in which the deity dwelt. Later on, it was thought essential to keep some icon under the tree to evoke the reverence of worshippers. When huge temples were constructed to accomodate these Gods who were originally domiciled under the trees, the people took special care not to remove those trees which had sacred associations. In fact, these trees formed the centres round which the temples were built.¹¹⁹ Many shrines referred to in the Periyapurānam are named after the sacred trees located in the shrines.¹²⁰

116 3146-47.

117 4237-40.

118 1470-73.

119 G. Subramaniapillai, "Tree worship and ophiolatry in the Tamil land", *Journal of the Annamalai University*, Vol. XII, 1942-43, pp. 70-79.

120 The names of the following shrines of Siva are after the names of the sacred trees - Tiruppanandāi,

Worship is also offered to holy rivers like the Kāviri and certain specific places along her course and certain times in the year are held to be very sacred; and bathing in the river in those times and places and doing '*pūja*' to the river is esteemed highly efficacious. Sekkilar extolls the greatness of the river Kāviri in the chapter on '*Tirunāṭṭu-chchirappu*'. Many of the shrines in the Chōla country are situated on the banks of the river Kāviri and on its various branches.

Similarly certain tanks are considered holy during particular periods and on special occasions. As said earlier a large tank at Kumbakōṇam is held in very great veneration and the tank is considered to become specially sacred on the occasion of the Māmaha festival which is celebrated once in twelve years.

Tirumullaivāyil, Tiruppanaiyūr, Tiruvērkaḍu, Tiruviḍaimarudūr, Tirumaṇaikkāḍu, Tiruppādirippuliyūr, Panañkāṭṭūr, Tiruvālaṅgāḍu, Tiruppāsūr, Tirukkachchūrālakkoil.

JAINISM AND BUDDHISM

The Periyapurāṇam contains abundant information on the Jains. Details regarding the growth, spread and popularity of Jainism in the Tamil country in the time of the Nayanmars, influences of the jains at the royal courts and their customs and practices are found in Sekkilar's account of the encounters of the Periyapurāṇam Nayanmars with Jains. As mentioned earlier the Periyapurāṇam itself was composed by Sekkilar with a view to combating the influence of the Jain epic *Jivakachintāmaṇi*, which dwelt much on earthly pleasures.

Jainism was popularised by Vardhamāna Mahāvira who lived in the 6th century B.C. From that time onwards Jainism along with Buddhism became an important religion in India. Jainism may be said to have made its way down South, at the time of Chandragupta Maurya (322-298 B. C.).¹ The Jain leader Bhadra Bāhu who was also the religious teacher of Chandragupta Maurya, came to South India with his disciples and settled at Sravanabelgola in Mysore. It is quite probable that the disciples of Bhadra Bāhu in the course of their missionary activities, propagated Jainism in the adjoining Tamil country.²

1 P. B. Desai, *Jainism in South India and some Jaina Epigraphs*, pp. 30-32.

2 According to some scholars Jainism seems to have made its way into the Tamil country from Andhra Desa. P. B. Desai, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

It is more likely that Jainism spread into the Tamil country from Mysore through the Koṅḡu country which is geographically contiguous to Mysore. This is proved

Hills were chosen as the sites for locating the citadels of the Jain faith. The atmosphere was conducive to the Jain priests for seclusion, prayer and meditation. Therefore the Jain centres originated and developed on or by the side of the hills and mountains.

From the accounts of epigraphs and monuments it is clear that Jainism flourished in the Tamil country from the early centuries of the Christian era. Quite a large number of caves containing rock beds have been found in the hills and mountainous regions in the Pudukkōṭṭai area and Madurai and Tirunelvēli districts. The Brahmi inscriptions found in these caves are assigned dates between 2nd century B. C. and 2nd century A. D.³

The fact that the Jains had established themselves well in the Tamil country by the early centuries of the Christian era is clear from their rich contribution to *San̄gam* literature. Some scholars are of the view that the authors of *Tolkāppiyam*, *Tirukkuraḷ* and *Ṣilappadikāram* were Jains. But this is not accepted by many. There are some works belonging to the *Padineṇkiḷḷkaṇakku* or the eighteen minor didactics such as *Nāḷaḍiyar*, *Paḷamoḷi*, *Aṇaṇiichchāram* and *Ēladi* whose authors were definitely Jains.⁴

When Jainism was first introduced into the Tamil country it was merely considered as a system of thought and was received with open arms. For the first time the Jains preached the principle of equality of man and taught that asceticism could be practised by all irrespective of caste, creed or community. They tried to form a casteless com-

by the relics of large number of Jain shrines and by the presence of many Jains even to-day in the Koṅgu country.

C. M. Ramachandran Chettiar, "Jainism in Koṅgu Nāḍu" *Q. J. M. S.*, Vol. 25. pp. 87-92.

3 M. S. Ramaswami Ayyangar, *Studies in South Indian Jainism*, p. 34.

4 V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar, "Some Jaina contributions to Tamil literature", *Proceedings and transactions of the 16th All India Orientalists Conference* 1951, pp. 276-280.

munity. The Jains were also the first to teach and practise the principle of Ahimsa. Ahimsa or non-violence was the first principle in Jainism. Jainism was against elaborate and costly rituals and killing of animals for sacrifices. Another cause for the popularity of the Jains was the activities of the celebrated Jain teachers whose great achievements in the field of religion and philosophy appealed to many in the Tamil country. They became moral teachers and some of the 'Eighteen Minor Works' were written by Jains with the aim of preaching their moral code of conduct. The Jains organised themselves into well knit teams of missionaries and they travelled throughout the length and breadth of the country preaching their religion. The establishment of the *Drāviḍa Saṅgha* at Madurai by Vajranandi in 470 A. D. was a landmark in the history of Jainism in the Tamil country. After the foundation of the *Saṅgha* Jainism made rapid progress and established many centres for propagation of their faith in the land. We have reference to one such centre in the Periyapurānam at Pāṭaliputra which is at present known as Tiruppādiripuliyūr.⁵

The hermitage of the Jain monks which were known as *Paḷli* in due course became institutions of learning where they taught religion, philosophy, grammar and literature. During this period Sanskrit was considered to be the language of the Hindu religion since the Vedic literature was in that language. The Jains adopted the language of the region for preaching their religion viz., Tamil and it provided an opportunity for the masses to learn and exchange their views on religion.⁶ It had a profound impact on the life and culture of the people.

A notable factor of Jainism in South India was the prosperous institution of nuns and its wide circle of female disciples. They are generally referred to as *Kurattiyar* in Tamil

5 According to P. B. Desai there existed a *Drāviḍa Saṅgha* in this place about the first century B. C. P. B. Desai *op. cit.* pp. 48-49.

Epigraphia Indica Vol. XIV, p. 334.

6 M. S. Venkatasami, *Samaṇamum Tamiḷum*, pp. 44-45.

literature.⁷ The Jain monks and nuns worked not only as spiritual teachers but also as social workers and they came into close contact with the masses who treated them with reverence and a feeling of attachment.⁸ Some *Pallis* of the Jains functioned as hospitals and feeding houses.

Another factor that helped the easy establishment of Jainism in the Tamil country was the patronage that it received from royalty. The Kaḷabhra kings, some of the Pallava kings of Kāñchi and a few of those of the Pāṇḍya country were adherents of Jainism. They evinced great interest in safeguarding and promoting the interests of the Jains. This fact is well attested by the *Periyapurāṇam* which in detail describes the efforts of Appar and Sambandar in re-establishing Śaivism at the Pallava and Pāṇḍya courts respectively.

Jainism which became popular in the Tamil country in the early centuries of the Christian era had a setback in the fifth and sixth centuries and received a severe blow in the time of Appar and Sambandar. The main cause for the decline of Jainism was that it gave up the spirit of toleration which characterised it at the beginning and in due course became an aggressive religion. The Jains aimed at the proselytization of the whole of Tamil country and attempted to do this by winning over the exclusive patronage of kings. They adopted a fanatical attitude, and started religious persecution with official sanction. Such encroachments into the personal beliefs and religious freedom of the masses led to widespread hatred of Jainism in the Tamil country. People groaning under the oppression of the Jains were looking forward for supporters who would espouse their cause and who would not only defend them but expose to the world the inconsistency between the life led by the

7 In an inscription of Nandivarman III there is reference to a nunnery in Viḍāl in North Arcot District *S. I. I.*, Vol. III, part iii No. 92.

8 In *Śilappadikāram* there is reference to a Jainnun by name Kavūndiyaḍigaḷ accompanying Kōvalan and Kaṇṇagi to Madurai.

oppressors and the faith they were propagating. The rise of the rival creeds, particularly of the orthodox order and their active hatred of Jainism in its philosophical and other aspects are responsible to certain extent for the rapid downfall of Jainism.

Svetambaras and *Digambaras* are the two major sects within Jainism. *Svetambaras* are those who clad themselves in white and who also clothe their idols. *Digambaras* (sky clad) are those who go about naked.⁹ The *Digambaras* maintain that a man can only obtain salvation when he is perfectly *nirvāṇa*, free from all possessions and all desires to possess and hence clothes ought not to be worn by a true ascetic.¹⁰

The *Digambara* sect was the one that prevailed in the Tamil country.¹¹ The *Digambaras* were called in Tamil literature as *Amaṇar* which means naked men and Jainism, as *Amaṇam* which means nakedness.¹² Nudity as the characteristic of the Jain ascetics who lived in the Tamil country during the time of the Nayanmars is mentioned in many places in the *Periyapurānam*.

A number of encounters of Saiva Nayanmars with the Jains are narrated in the *Periyapurānam*. The account of the encounters clearly portray the conflict between the two rival groups. It is difficult to believe *in toto* all that is said by the author for it must be remembered that Sekkilar was a staunch Saiva. However, certain inferences can be drawn from the biographies of those saints, who had encounters with the Jains.

It has been mentioned earlier that Mūrti Nayanar lived in Madurai during the Kaḷabhra occupation of the

9 Not all followers of the *Digambara* sect went about naked. Only the ascetics remained naked.

10 Dr. Buhler, "The *Digambara* Jains", *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. VII, 1878, pp. 28-29.

Puran Chand Nahar, "A note on the *Svetambara* and *Digambara* sects", *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. 58, 1929, p. 16.

11 M. S. Venkatasami, *Samaṇamum Tamiḷum*, p. 8.

12 *Tamil Lexicon*, Vol. I, p. 101, 1350, "Uḍaiyoḷindu".

Pāṇḍya country. The Kaḷabhras appear to have embraced Jainism and come under the influence of the Jains who began to persecute the Śaiva saints and disregard the worship of Śiva.¹³ The period of the Kaḷabhras must, therefore, be considered as the period when Jainism had reached its peak. The Kaḷabhra king who ruled during the time of Mūrti Nayanar appears to have deliberately deprived the Nayanar of the means of preparing sandal paste for the rituals to the God at Madurai temple. This he did, perhaps, on the advice of the Jains in his court. Ultimately Mūrti Nayanar himself succeeded the Kaḷabhra ruler and re-established Śaivism in the Pāṇḍya country.¹⁴ But this does not mean that Jainism was completely wiped out of the Pāṇḍya country because we know that in the time of Niṇṇa Sir Neḍumāraṇ, Jainism was once again the religion of the king as well as a considerable part of the population.

Naminandi Aḍigaḷ Nayanar used to visit the Śiva temple at Tiruvārūr quite often and do some service to the Lord in the temple. During one such visit he entered the temple at Aṇṇēri (situated within the Tiruvārūr temple) and after offering prayers and worship, he desired to light some lamps in the temple when he was about to leave. It was too late in the evening for him to fetch from his native village ghee for the lamp and therefore he approached the residents nearby for some ghee for lighting the lamps in the temple. But the residents happened to be Jains and they ridiculed the Nayanar by saying that lights were too much for the God who held the fire in his hand and that they could not spare any ghee for such a purpose and that if he wanted to light the lamps he could do so with water. The Nayanar at the command of the Lord filled all the lamps with water and lit them and they shone brighter than ever.

13 M. S. Ramaswami Ayyangar, *Studies in South Indian Jainism*, pp. 55-56.

K. R. Venkata Raman, "A note on the Kaḷabhras", *Transactions of the Archaeological Society of South India*, 1956-57, pp. 98-99.

14 1012-1013.

On seeing this the Jains felt ashamed at the true devotion of the Nayanar and vanished from the city of Tiruvārūr.¹⁵

Another Nayanar who was obstructed by the Jains from doing services to Lord Siva at Tiruvārūr was Daṇḍi Aḍigaḷ Nayanar. Daṇḍi Aḍigaḷ was a native of Tiruvārūr and was born blind. The Jains spoilt the Tiruvārūr temple tank in many ways. The Jains ridiculed the futile attempts of the blind Nayanar to renovate the tank and told him to desist from the work on the ground that by so digging, the Nayanar was causing injury to sentient things, according to Jain philosophy. But the Nayanar replied them that he was working for a good cause in the name of Lord Siva. When the Jains continued to insult him the Nayanar challenged them to accept defeat if he gained eyesight by the mercy of Lord Siva. The Jains agreed to quit the city if the Nayanar could do as he promised and went on to thrash down the scaffolding erected by the Nayanar. Daṇḍi Aḍigaḷ offering prayers to God plunged into the tank and rose up with his eyesight gained, and the Jains at once became blind and were driven out of the city and their *Pallis* were pulled down.¹⁶ This tank is in existence to this day with a temple in the middle of it and it is considered to be the largest of its kind in Southern India. It is popularly known as Kamalālayam tank.¹⁷

From the foregoing account of the confrontation of the two Nayanmars with the Jains we learn that the Jains lived in large numbers in Tiruvārūr. It will be also seen that the Jains often quarreled with the Śaiva Nayanmars and spoke ill of their rituals and other services to their Lord. These two Nayanmars lived prior to the Appar-Sambandar period. That the clashes starting from the time of these two Nayanmars became more violent subsequently can be understood from the lives of Appar and Sambandar. This leads us to infer that Jainism was slowly losing its hold on the

15 1866-1883.

16 3595-3615.

17 The annual float festival attracts a large crowd even now.

people and that to counterbalance it they resorted to unfair methods to gain popularity with the followers of Śaivism.

Appar and his younger contemporary Sambandar belonged to the 7th century A. D., the former being definitely known to be a contemporary of the great Pallava king Mahendravarman I (A. D. 600 – 630). Appar in his youth was attracted by Jainism and its philosophy of 'non-killing' or *ahimsa*. He went to Pataliputra where an important Jain monastery flourished and entered the monastery and embraced Jainism. Having mastered all the Jain literature he was admired by the Jain scholars who bestowed on Appar the name Dharmasēna and subsequently made him the head of the monastery. Dharmasēna won great fame by defeating the Buddhists in a controversy and stood foremost among the Jain monks of the place.

When Appar abandoned the Jain monastery at Pāṭali-putra and was re-converted to Śaivism by his sister Tilakavati, the Jains bitterly complained to the Pallava king about the sudden desertion of their favourite Dharmasēna. It is said in the Periyapurāṇam that on the advice of the Jains, the Pallava king ordered to inflict severe punishments on Appar for renouncing Jainism and going back to Śaivism. The Jains cast Appar into a burning lime kiln but he fixed his meditation upon the Lord and sang one of the *Tēvāram* hymns and escaped unhurt. They gave him poisoned milk to drink and through the mercy of Śiva he received no harm from it. They let an infuriated elephant loose upon him to trample him to death; but the animal turned upon the Jains themselves and crushed them. Lastly they tied him to a pillar of stone and cast him into the sea and by the mercy of Lord Śiva the pillar floated on the waves like a raft of wood and Appar was carried along with it until he came to the mouth of the river Gaḍilam, near Tiruppādirippuliyūr where he landed in safety.¹⁸ How far the Pallava king was responsible for these persecutions, we can never know. But it is clear that the Jains of Pāṭaliputra at this time were

favourites of the Pallava ruler and exercised considerable influence in the king's court.

When the Pallava king learnt about these violent persecutions and the surprising way Appar faced them the king felt guilty and was full of repentance and remorse. He fell at Appar's feet, and asked for pardon. Appar blessed the king who had at last realized his folly in deserting the faith of his forefathers. The king was reconverted to Saivism and thereafter made his contribution to the re-establishment of Saivism in the Tamil country and exercised all means to suppress the Jain faith. According to the Periyapuranaṁ the Jain monastery at Pāṭaliputra was destroyed and that material was used to build the Śiva temple at Tiruvadigai.¹⁹

As already seen in the chapter on the "Age of the Nayanmars" the Pallava king has been identified as Mahēndravarmaṇ I. As seen above it was during his reign that Jainism which was till then enjoying unparalleled royal patronage, received a major set back in the Pallava country. Mahēndravarmaṇ I and his successors in their zeal to revive Saivism built many shrines to Śiva and the temple constructional activity reached its zenith at the time of the Imperial Chōḷas. At this stage it must be remembered that Jainism received only the first blow and it was not completely extinct. It continued to thrive for a few more centuries which fact will be discussed towards the end of this chapter.

That the Jains lived in large numbers in the Chōḷa country during the time of the Appar is also proved by the Periyapuranaṁ. There was a Śiva temple by name Vāḍataḷi at Tiruppaḷaiyārai (three miles south-west of Kumbakōṇaṁ in the Tañjāvūr district). The Jains of the place had buried the Śiva *Liṅga* of the temple so that none could see it. On learning this Appar went to the temple and took a vow not to move from that place, nor have any food, till the *Liṅga* was re-installed. In the Periyapuranaṁ it is said that Śiva appeared in dream to the king of that place and ordered him to clear off the Jains from the place, renovate the Vāḍataḷi temple and re-install the *Liṅga* and help Appar to

worship freely. The king went there next morning, offered his obeisance to Appar, repenting his past neglect of the temple and saw to it that the Jains were driven out of the place, and the *Līṅga* was re-installed and worshipped regularly thereafter.²⁰

From the foregoing incident we infer that some of the kings in the Tamil country in the time of Appar were indifferent to the religious activities and at times patronised the Jains. The missionary zeal of Appar and subsequently of Sambandar in reviving Śaivism almost wrecked the power of the Jains. The *Tēvāram* hymns of these two devotees are replete with denunciations of Jainism and Jains.

Sambandar was responsible for reviving Śaivism in the Pāṇḍya country. The ruler of the Pāṇḍya kingdom at the time of Sambandar was Niṇṇa Sir Neḍumāraṇ, the conqueror of Nelveli. The king was a staunch Jain while his wife Maṅgayarkkarasi, a daughter of the Chōḷa king, was a devoted worshipper of Śiva. The king's minister Kulachiṇai was also a worshipper of Śiva. The queen and the minister contrived to bring Sambandar to Madurai to bring back the king to their own faith and thus establish Śaivism in the land. The invitation was readily accepted by Sambandar to the great dismay of the Jain ascetics of Madurai.²¹

Inauspicious incidents were noted by the Jains when Sambandar arrived at Madurai. They all rushed to the king and told him the purpose of Sambandar's visit. When the king asked them what action could be taken, the Jains suggested that the house of Sambandar could be set on fire. The king agreed to that, and the Jains set fire to the building occupied by Sambandar and his followers. But Sambandar and his followers escaped unhurt. The queen and the minister regretted this unhappy incident. On the other hand as a kind of retribution, the king fell ill

20 1559-1565.

21 2497-2514.

and his Jain advisers were asked to cure him. They did not succeed in their efforts and hence the pious queen and the minister begged the king's permission to allow Sambandar to treat him. Sambandar sang a hymn and appealed to Lord Śiva at Ālavāy (Madurai) and the king soon recovered from the illness. Then Sambandar proceeded to prove to the king the utter futility of Jain scriptures and the impotence of the Jain religion. Then an assembly of Śaivas and Jains was convened to debate the superiority of either sect and the king agreed to join the winning side. The two parties agreed that their respective systems should be tested by fire and by water. Each party threw into fire a palm leaf scroll, inscribed with the fundamental tenet of their respective faiths. The Jain scroll was at once burnt to ashes and the Śaiva scroll remained unscathed. They then repaired to the banks of the river Vaigai and threw their scrolls into the stream. The Jain scroll was washed away so swiftly with the current that they were unable to trace it, while Sambandar's leaf came up the stream, cutting through the water. Thus in these ordeals of fire and water the Jains had an inglorious defeat and Śaivism was accepted as the true religion by the king. Then came the punishment of the Jains. They were sentenced to be impaled and through the zeal of the faithful prime-minister eight thousand of them suffered that horrible punishment. At last the king and all his subjects returned to the Śaiva faith. Thus a death blow to Jainism was dealt and this marks the beginning of the decline of Jainism and of the revival of Śaivism in the Tamil country.²²

It is true that religious antagonism was sharp at that time, and impalement as a punishment for felony is attested by more or less contemporary sculptures and traditional festivals. It is not improbable that persecution on such a large scale should have taken place, particularly in the light

of evidence of similar persecution of Jains during Mahendra-varman's reign.²³

The reverses sustained by the Jains in the time of Appar and Sambandar did not crush their faith completely.²⁴ They only weakened and reduced the prestige of the Jains in the Tamil country. Jainism continued to exist in the monasteries, which, besides being centres of religious life, were also functioning as literary schools. Such monasteries flourished at Vaḷḷimalai and Tirumalai in the North Arcot district and Tagadūr in the Salem district in the 9th-13th centuries.²⁵ The Imperial Chōlas followed a liberal polity of tolerance and provided many endowments to Jain *mutts* in the Tamil country.²⁶ But a general decline on a large scale occurred from the 13th century onwards.

The peculiar habits, practices, customs, manners, and mode of dress of the Jains are also mentioned in the Periyapurāṇam. It may perhaps be worthwhile to remember that the author of the Periyapurāṇam – Sekkilar was a staunch Śaivite and he might have somewhat exaggerated the facts while mentioning anything about Jains and Jainism. They are described as those worshipping 'Arhat' (1384, 1389); those who stand and eat and continuously talk while eating

23 It is well known that the Jains in the time of Appar and Sambandar took unfair advantage of their friendship with, and influence over ruling sovereigns by having recourse to forcible conversion.

M. S. Ramasami Ayyangar, *Studies in South Indian Jainism*, pp. 69-70.

24 The Jains after their persecution in the Pallava and Pāṇḍya kingdoms migrated in large numbers to their sacred religious centres Sravanabelgola in Mysore and sought refuge under the Gaṅga rulers. In Mysore it was stamped out by Liṅgayat rising and by the advent of Ramanuja in the 12th century A. D. K. V. Subramanya Aiyar, "Origin and decline of Buddhism and Jainism in South India", *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. 40, 1911, p. 218.

25 B. A. Salatore, *Mediæval Jainism*, pp. 243-248.

26 *S. I. I.*, Vol. III. No. 9, 397 of 1914; *A. R. E.* 1913 p. 112.

1312, 1350,) those dwelling in 'Pāḷi' (1315, 1411); those who never bathed (1552) ; those with dark complexion (1365, 1387); those from whose mouth foul smell emanated (1367); those drinking water from ascetics pitcher (1318, 1325); those followers of the non-killing creed (1302, 1354); those carrying mat in their arm pits (1312, 1325, 1360); those in the habit of plucking their hair (1312, 1318, 1341, 1565); those carrying pea-cock feathers and pea-cock feather umbrellas with them (1318, 1325, 1346); those who uttered falsehood (1343, 1354, 1551); those swerved from the path of virtue and indulged in aimless and useless acts (1360); those who are highly treacherous (1367); those who are highly hypocritical and dangerous (1368; 1369); and as those without sense and without character (1562).

These invectives against the Jains reveal the strong sense of resentment the author of the Periapuranam had held against the heterodox religions like Jainism. It may be interesting to note here that the *Tēvāram* hymnists also indulged in such abusive outbursts against Jains and the Buddhists.²⁷

For nearly fifteen centuries Jainism remained a potent factor in the religions life of the Tamil country and made a deep impression on the life and culture of the people. According to some scholars many ideas which are prevalent at present in Śaivism (as well as in Vaiṣṇavism) have been taken or adopted from Jainism.²⁸ As will be seen in the following paragraphs some of their views are acceptable and some of them are not.

The devotees of Siva counteracted the Universal effect of the most potent weapon of the Jains as expressed in their well known gifts made in Jain monasteries such as free supply of food and medicine and free education. It is true that some of the Periapuranam Nayanmars took the task

27 V. S. Chengalvaraya Pillai, *Tēvāra Oḷi Neṟi-Sambandar* Vol. I, pp. 189 to 198. *Tēvāra Oḷi Neṟi-Appar* Vol. I, pp. 190-195, *Tēvāra Oḷi Neṟi-Sundarar* pp. 154-155.

28 B. A. Salatore, *Mediaeval Jainism*, p. 272-273.

of feeding the devotees of Śiva as their sole principle. This is well illustrated in the lives of Ṭaiyāṅkuḍimāra Nayanar and Mūrkkā Nayanar, Mūrkkā Nayanar went to the extent of gambling as a means of earning money to supply food for devotees.²⁹ Such humanitarian measures need not necessarily have been copied from the Jains for they are common to almost all religions.

The Śaiva saints discarded the caste system in imitation of the Jains and admitted into their fold people of the so-called lower social order. This is cited as the cause for the inclusion of the butcher-saint Ṭirunīlappōvār, the fisherman-saint Adibatta Nayanar, the hunter-saint Kaṇṇappa Nayanar and the potter-saint Tirunilakaṇṭa Nayanar in the list of the sixty-three Nayanmars. Hence it is obvious that in the matter of worship and in the attainment of salvation, all were considered equal and no distinction whatsoever based on caste or sex was observed.

It is said that the Śaiva Nayanmars aimed at the highest altruistic principles very much like the Jains. The principle of living for others and of self-less sacrifice and devotion are factors that are emphasised by almost all religions in the world. So it need not have been copied by one religion from the other.

It is said that the Śaiva hymnists composed hymns in honour of the local deities and especially of Śiva, obviously after the manner of the Jains who worshipped their Tirthāṅkaras in their shrines. Śaivites are those who worship Śiva and it is no wonder that the *Tēvāram* hymnists as true Śaivites sang in praise of Śiva in their hymns. But it is true that these hymns served as an effective instrument for the hymnists in their efforts to denounce Jainism and revive Śaivism.

It is said that the Śaiva saints instituted the hierarchy of sixty-three saints as the Jains had done with their sixty-three personages called '*Trishashṭi Salāka Puruṣas*'. As discussed earlier in the Introductory chapter on the number sixty-three, it is probable that Śaiva hagiologists aimed at

producing a work similar to the '*Trishashṭi Salāka Puruṣa Charita*', and adopted the number sixty-three to their list of devotees also.

It is said that the Saivas secured the political patronage of the State by winning over the good grace of kings, just as the Jains had done in the early days of their history. This is also true to a certain extent. It has been already explained how Appar and Sambandar converted the Pallava and the Pāṇḍya kings to Saivism. We have earlier seen that in the time of Appar and Sambandar, the Jains misused the royal patronage in their proselytizing activities. When this was exposed to the very patrons by Appar and Sambandar, the kings were wise enough to realise their folly and once again patronise Saivism, the religion of their forefathers.

But none can deny the rich contribution made by Jain authors to Tamil literature. The credit of enriching the Tamil literature by composing various works on didactics, grammar, prosody and lexicography and commentaries, goes to Jain scholars. The doubtful identity of the authors of *Tolkāppiyam* and *Tirukkuraḷ* as Jains has been mentioned earlier. Of the five major epic poems in the Tamil literature three epics namely *Silappadikāram*, *Valaiyāpati* and *Jivakachintāmaṇi* were composed by Jain scholars. As mentioned in the beginning Sekkilar composed the *Periyapurānam* with a view to combating the influence exercised by the *Jivakachintāmaṇi*. All the five minor epics namely *Yasōdara Kāvīyam*, *Sūlāmaṇi*, *Nilakēsi*, *Udayaṇa Kādai* and *Nāgakumāra Kāvīyam* were made by Jain poets. Another great work of the Jains in the Tamil land can be said to be the *Sripurāṇa* and it is considered to be a sacred work based upon Jinasēna's *Mahāpurāṇa*. It is in the *Mahāpurāṇa* that the lives of the sixty-three sacred saints of Jainism are dealt with. As noted before some think that the Saivas on the model of this *Mahāpurāṇa* listed the Saiva devotees also as sixty-three in number. '*Nēminādam*' and '*Nannūl*' are the two popular and important grammatical works of the Jain Scholars. Jains were the first to give out lexicons in Tamil language viz.,

'*Divākara Nigaṇḍu*', '*Piṅgalandai Nigaṇḍu*' and '*Chūḍāmaṇi Nigaṇḍu*'. Thus the Jains who came and settled in the Tamil country took to Tamil language and literature as a hobby and finally became great Tamil scholars in their own right, making their influence felt in every branch of Tamil literature.

BUDDHISM

Buddhism was propagated in the Tamil country by the missionary activities of king Asōka.³⁰ In the *Saṅgam* period Buddhists along with Jains flourished in considerable numbers without let or hindrance in different parts of the Tamil country. Kāñchi was an important Buddhist centre in the early centuries of the Christian era. The Tamil epic *Maṇimēkalai* devotes one whole section to the description of the Kāñchi city and the Buddhist establishment that existed in the city.³¹ In the itinerary of Hiuen Tsang there are references to parts of the city sacred to Buddha. In his *Travels* it is said that there were more than one hundred Buddhist monasteries with above ten thousand inmates in them.³² The decline was mainly because of the attacks of Hindu revivalists and leaders of the *Bhakti* movement. Without proper leaders and with the withdrawal of royal support, Buddhism declined gradually after the 7th and 8th centuries A. D. The process was hastened by the triumph of Jains over Buddhists.³³

Buddhists are referred to in the *Periyapurāṇam* as 'Sākkīyar'.³⁴ One of the sixty-three Nayanmars bore the

30 B. C. Law, *Buddhistic Studies*, p. 673.

31 *Kāḍai XXVIII*.

32 T. Watters, *On Yuwan Chwang's Travels in India*, 629-645 A. D. p. 226.

According to some scholars Buddhism was on the decline even when Hiuen Tsang travelled in South India.

K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Culture and History of the Tamils*, p. 121.

33 B. C. Law, *Buddhistic Studies*, p. 688.

34 2802-03-05-07-09-10-11-22, 3636-38-39-42.

name Śākkiya Nayanar.³⁵ As the name itself suggests he was at first a Buddhist. He was a native of Tiruchchaṅga-maṅgai, a hamlet near Kāñchi. He belongs to pre-Appar-Sambandar period. He is said to have proceeded to Kāñchi, then a reputed centre of various religious faiths, to know about the truth of all religions. It was there he first became a Buddhist and mastered Buddhist Philosophical treatises. But he was not satisfied with the means they advocated for the liberation of the soul from the cycle of birth.³⁶ The philosophy of Śaivism appealed to him more and so he became a convert to Śaivism.

This shows that Buddhism was popular in the Tamil country and attracted men to its fold before the days of Appar and Sambandar. The life of Śākkiya Nayanar reveals to us that the choice of one's faith was left to himself and that there was no social compulsion or religious coercion. This also speaks to a certain extent of the religious harmony that prevailed in the city of Kāñchi. It is also clear that the Buddhists never persecuted the Nayanar for leaving their faith and going back to Śaivism as Jains did in the case of Appar.

The fact that Buddhism was widely prevalent in the Tamil country in the 7th century A. D. is well attested by the references to the Buddhists in the *Tēvāram* hymns of Appar and Sambandar. Every one of Sambandar's hymns, invariably the tenth verse of every hymn, contains a thorough denunciation of the Buddhists and Jains which goes to prove that those religions were popular at that time. The heretical sects were so strong as to call forth the attacks of the Śaiva Nayanmars and the Vaiṣṇava Āḷvārs.

The one cherished ambition of the *Tēvāram* hymnists was to revive Śaivism and in pursuance of this ambition, as already seen they travelled throughout the Tamil country visiting all sacred places and singing hymns on everyone of them. In the course of their endless travels they carried on a vigorous propaganda condemning the Buddhists as

35 3637.

36 3638-39.

well as Jains. The Periyapurānam describes in detail how these Nayanmars in the course of their travels engaged themselves in religious disputations with the rival sects and how they ultimately came out successful in such controversies and established the cause of Śaivism. We have earlier seen such encounters with the Jains and their results.

After bringing back the Pāṇḍya king Niṇṇa Sīr Neṇḍumāraṇ and the Pāṇḍya country to the Śaiva fold, Sambandar recommenced his travels in the Chōḷa country and the most remarkable of his achievements against the Buddhists took place at Bōḍimaṅgai.³⁷ Bōḍimaṅgai, the citadel of Buddhism, was on the way from Teḷichchēri to Tirukkaḍavūr. It may be the same as Bōḍimaṅgaḷam in the Māyavaram Taluk (Taṇjāvūr district) otherwise called Tiruviḍaikkaḷi. Buddha images have been discovered from the neighbourhood of this place in recent times. Bōḍimaṅgai seems to have been an exclusive colony of the Buddhists.³⁸ When Sambandar reached Bōḍimaṅgai, his followers drew the attention of the residents of the place to the arrival of the Nayanar and challenged them for a contest. This challenge of the Śaivas to the Buddhists of the place could not go unaccepted and they immediately took up the challenge and their reaction also was equally forceful.³⁹

The enraged Śākyas, on hearing the arrival of Sambandar gathered together and went to their spiritual leader, Buddhanandi and to the other learned *Thēras* and informed them of the challenge. When Buddhanandi came to know of all these things, he burst forth in indignation and along with a congregation of *Thēras* went to meet Sambandar. In the meantime, however, a devotee of Sambandar grew impatient and uttered a curse against Buddhanandi and as a consequence Buddhanandi died on the spot before he met Sambandar and there was confusion in the Buddhist camp.⁴⁰

37 2802.

38 *B. C. Law Commemoration Volume*—part I, p. 43.

39 2803–04.

40 According to Nambi Āṇḍar Nambi's account in *Āḷuḍaiya Piḷḷaiyār Tiruttogai* (11. 19–20), Buddha-

This was an incident of great disgrace and shame to the Buddhists and they could not rest content with that. They rallied again under the leadership of another *Thēra* by name Sāriputta who was well versed in the *Piṭakas*.

Sāriputta took necessary precautions to safeguard himself against magic and trickery and commenced the disputation with Sambandar and throughout the contest Sambandar was present but he did not personally take part in the wordy duel. The details of the discussion between the votaries of the two different creeds are narrated in detail, in fourteen stanzas in the Periyapurānam.⁴¹ From the dialogue we infer that the *Thēravāda* school of Buddhism was the prevailing faith and in his answers Sāriputta follows closely the *Thēravāda* position regarding the Buddha, his Enlightenment and the nature of the release.⁴² The ultimate result of the contest was that the Buddhists were vanquished and Sāriputta and his followers embraced Śaivism accepting its superiority. The fact that there were a number of *Thēras* in Bōdimaṅgai shows that there must have flourished a Buddha *Vihāra* at that place.⁴³

From the foregoing account we infer that Sambandar upheld the cause of Śaivism not only against the Jains of the Pāṇḍya country but also against the Buddhists of the Chōḷa country. This narrative also indicates the existence in considerable numbers of *Thēravāda* Buddhists in the Tamil country at the time of Sambandar.

nandhi's death was brought about by Sambandar himself. After this incident Nambi's account does not give any particulars regarding what follows. Evidently Sēkkiḷār does not want to attribute such a method of controversy to such a great saint as Sambandar.

41 2811-24.

42 B. C. Law *Commemoration Volume*-part I, p. 46. The substance of the dialogue has been given in prose version in a Tamil article recently.

N. R. Murugavel, "Sēkkiḷār viḷakkum tattuvaccenṇēṇi", *Siddhantam*, Vol. 49 (1976), pp. 150-156.

43 2815.

The preservation and spread of a country's heritage is considered to be one of the most important objects of education. For about two thousand years or more the Tamil country has been evolving a culture of its own absorbing into it some elements from her neighbours. The Tamil country achieved excellence in different fields at different times. The *Saṅgam* epoch saw an outburst of poetry and song and great heights in commercial development. The early Pallava period witnessed a spiritual and literary awakening coming after the dark days of the Kaḷabhra interregnum. The later Pallava period saw the growth of art and architecture, the rise and development of the Bhakti movement and the outpourings of devotional hymns. The imperial Chōḷa period was once again a time of commercial and maritime supremacy that saw empires being established overseas. It witnessed also the efflorescence of fine arts and literature. In all these stages of Tamil history education had its natural development.

The extant *Saṅgam* works bear ample testimony to the distinction the Tamils had attained in the field of education during that period. Of the extant *Saṅgam* works *Tolkāppiyam* is the earliest work and is assigned by scholars to 4th century B. C.¹ Tolkāppiyar, the author of *Tolkāppiyam*, in many places mentions the existence of grammarians contemporary as well as prior to him. This proves the fact that there must have been many grammatical and literary

1 R. Sathianathaier, *History of India*, Vol. I, pp. 170-171. P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar suggests a date certainly prior to 2nd or 1st century B. C., *History of the Tamils*, p. 70.

works prior to *Tolkāppiyam*.² *Saṅgam* anthologies like *Puṟaṇānūṟu* and *Pattuppāṭṭu* represent 550 poets some of them women.³ Notable among the women poets was Perum-Kāḱkaippāṇiniyār who wrote the grammar of prosody, an important and difficult aspect of grammar in Tamil literature. There were also other women poets like Auvaiyār, Ponmuṇḍiyār and Veṇṇikkuyattiyār. The galaxy of 550 poets included men and women from every social stratum such as kings, Brahmins, merchants, tillers, carpenters, smiths, weavers, doctors and potters. This shows that Education in the *Saṅgam* age was within the reach of all, irrespective of caste or sex.

There are evidences to show the learning and recitation of the Vedas by Brahmins in the *Saṅgam* period.⁴ That there were theological schools of Buddhists and Jains at important cities is borne out by the *Silappadikāram* and the *Maṇimēkalai*.⁵

The teacher was known by different names as *Iḷambālā-ciriyar*, *Bālāciriyar*, *Āciriyar* and *Kaṇakkāyar* and they correspond respectively to the modern elementary school teacher, secondary school teacher and college teacher and mathematics teacher or language teacher.⁶ This goes to prove

2 "Much of Tamil literature and many stages of grammars should have existed before the *Tolkāppiyam* to satisfy the existence of this perfect grammar."

T. R. Sessa Ayyangar, *Dravidian India*, p. 92.

3 M. Rajamanickam, *Tamiḷ Moḷi Ilakkiya Varalāṟu* pp. 309-320.

4 M. Rajamanickam, *The Development of Śaivism in South India*, pp 16-18.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

6 M. A. Dorai Rangaswamy, "Education in the Cankam Age", *Annals of Oriental Research*, Vol. XI, 1953-54, pp. 1-5. 'Kaṇakkāyam' may mean a group of students specialising in mathematics and 'Kaṇakkāyar' then may mean teacher of mathematics or if the term 'Kaṇakku' is taken to mean 'Neduṇkaṇakku' (நெடுந் கணக்கு) or the alphabet, Kaṇakkāyar stands for a 'language teacher.'

that there were different stages in learning, from the elementary to the most advanced.

Kings of those days held the educated in high esteem.⁷ From the Pallava inscriptions we learn that seats of higher learning, known as *Ghaṭika* received royal patronage. *Bhāṭavṛtti* is the term denoting a grant of land to learned Brahmins as an honorarium for freely imparting their knowledge. When a whole village was settled by a number of learned Brahmins, it was commonly known as an *Agrahāra*.⁸

In the age of the Nayanmars learning in the traditional way was held in high esteem and was encouraged. Education in those days was entirely different from modern educational system. Education was not as widespread and universal in those days as it is to-day and also the scope was much more limited. Education was not however confined to a particular caste or group or sex. Anyone who wanted to acquire learning could do so provided he had the aptitude and strove for it. The motive for receiving education was that it made persons realise fully their potentialities and so worthy of respect.

Normally children of five years and more were entrusted to the care of a teacher by the parents. It was the custom to commence the first lesson on an auspicious day and the occasion was celebrated with great rejoicing.⁹ As soon as

7 The Pāṇḍya king Neduñcheḷiyan, himself an author of a verse in *Puṇanānūru*, expresses in the verse his reverence to educated persons. v. no. 72.

8 C. Minakshi, *Administration and social life under the Pallavas*, pp. 186-203.

9 This custom continues even to-day when fresh admissions are made on the *Vijayadasami*, the day after the *Navarāthri* celebrations in honour of Sarasvatī - Goddess of learning. This ceremony was otherwise known as *Maiyaḍāl* (மையாடல்). N. Chengalvarayan, "Education and educational institutions of the ancient Tamils as obtained in the Tamil classics", *Proceedings and Transactions of the 9th All India Oriental Congress*, p. 1270.

children attained the age of five teaching was started with earnestness. Saṇḍesura Nayanar, in line with the tradition of his caste, was taught the Vedas and the Āgamas. He attained perfection in such a short time that the teachers themselves were astonished at his extraordinary intelligence.¹⁰ Tirunāvukkarasu Nayanar as well as Siraḷadēvar, son of Siṟuttoṇḍa Nayanar, commenced their studies soon after tonsure.¹¹

The fact that this initiation ceremony was observed even by tribal people is clearly evident from the Periyapurānam where, in the biography of Kaṇṇappa Nayanar details of this ceremony are given more vividly. In tune with the tribal customs the first lesson consisted of not learning of any alphabet but of the art of using bow and arrow. As mentioned earlier usually the learning of the alphabet commenced around the age of five. However, as learning the use of bow and arrow required a fair amount of physical strength, the training may be said to have commenced around the age of twelve.¹² The father of Kaṇṇappa Nayanar fixed an auspicious day for the first lesson after consulting the elders in the community, and extended invitation to all tribal leaders in the surrounding hills. All the tribal leaders responded to the invitation and came to the ceremony with presents. In their presence the ceremony commenced with the tying of sacred bands (*kāppu*) on the wrist of the Nayanar, and on the deity kept for worship on the occasion. This was followed by the blessings of the elders. All those present

10 1218, 1220. The Brahmin boys learnt the Vedas and the Āgamas from the age of five itself. But they started reciting (perhaps in temples and on other religious functions) only after the Upanayana ceremony.

1219. C. Kunhan Raja, *Some aspects of education in Ancient India*, p. 25.

11 1285, 3681. The ceremony of shaving the head is known in Sanskrit as *Sūḍakarma* and in Tamil as *Mayir - nikku - maṇavinai* (மயிர் நீக்கு மணவினை). This is said to have taken place at the age of three; 3681.

12 676, 677.

were entertained with a sumptuous feast prepared specially in the tribal style for the occasion. It is said that the feasts and other preliminaries lasted for seven days and on the seventh day all gathered around the teacher-hunter and the Nayanar who was dressed in hunter's style, to see the first lesson being taught. The ceremonial drums and the rejoicings of the people rent the air when the Nayanar took up the bow for the first lesson. The Nayanar thereafter continued the lessons every day and attained perfection in a short period.¹³ This initiation ceremony may not have been observed in such detail by all tribal people. It nevertheless gives us an idea of the tribal customs prevalent in those days among the prominent men in the tribe like Kaṇṇappa Nayanar's father.

The teacher was called *Ācīriyar* or *Ācān*.¹⁴ The school was called *Paḷḷi* and it was usually the front pial of the teacher's house.¹⁵ The relationship between the teacher and the pupil was regarded as filial in character. The teacher was seated on a high pedestal and the pupil sat on the floor while learning.¹⁶

The Brahmin boys learnt the Vedic lore and other scriptures necessary for their profession. The Periyapurānam refers to the schools where the Vedas were taught as *Kiḍai*.¹⁷ The temple priests specialised in the Vedas and Āgamas.¹⁸

In the institution of higher learning advanced study of philosophy and other aspects of a particular religion were pursued. It was in one such school of Buddhist theology at Kāñchipuram that Śakkiya Nayanar joined and sought the

13 677, 681-683, 686, 688, 690.

14 1208.

15 3681, 3716, 3717, 3741. The term *Paḷḷi* for school originated from the monasteries of the Jains and Buddhists which are called *Paḷḷi*.

16 480.

17 "maṇai payilum kiḍai" 81, 1063, 1208, 1222, 1286, 2525.

18 354.

means of attaining salvation.¹⁹ Kāñchipuram which was the capital of the Pallavas was noted for its institutions of higher learning which are termed as *Ghaṭika*. *Ghaṭika* was a place or institution where many scholars and students strove for knowledge.²⁰

In the Periyapurāṇam there is reference to a school run by Gaṇanāda Nayanar which imparted training in temple services to pious devotees of God. He taught them horticulture, the art of making garlands, the mode of bringing water for rituals, the care of burning or lighting the lamps and the way of writing and reading the scriptures in the temples.²¹ Men were trained by the Nayanar in the respective fields to which they were most suited.

Ēnādināda Nayanar was running a military academy training youngsters in the art of warfare. The very name of the Nayanar indicates that he held a high position like that of a commander-in-chief in the army. The term *Ēnādi* was a title conferred by the king upon the high military officials and a title known as *Ēnāḍippattam*, in the form of a medal or ring, was presented to them.²² The Nayanar gave special training in sword fighting. That there were more than one such military training school is proved by the fact that yet another chief instructor of one such training school challenged this Nayanar for a duel to establish his military prowess.²³

The Jains had monasteries in which monks were trained and educated. They enjoyed royal patronage for long and many rulers like Pallava Mahēndravarmān and Pāṇḍya Māravarman were Jains prior to their conversion. Appar who was also a Jain for some time with the name Dharmasēna, received his instructions in Jainism at the famous Jain monastery at Pāṭaliputra which was later destroyed by

19 3638.

20 1125, 1161.

21 3924-26.

22 610, 620.

23 615-616.

Mahāndravarma when he returned to the Saiva fold.²⁴ The Jains were very fond of theological disputations and there are references in the Periyapurānam to the encounters between the Nayanmars and the Jains. It is probable that there were monasteries, on the model of the one at Pāṭali-putra, at places like Madurai and Tiruvārūr also, for Jains were found in large numbers in those places.

There are many references to Saiva *mathas* in the Periyapurānam.²⁵ The *mathas* which existed at important Saiva sacred centres served as great educational institutions. They were all humming with devotees engaged in the pursuit of knowledge. There is reference to Vedic schools functioning in the *mathas* at Tillai.²⁶ Philosophical concepts of Saivism were also expounded in the *mathas*.²⁷

The kings and princes had a different curriculum of studies. Princes were taught to be toxophilites, to fight without flinching and win victories. They learnt grammar and languages along with statecraft, law, archery, riding, wrestling, fencing and other heroic accomplishments.²⁸ Aiyaḍiḡaḷ Kāḍavarkōn belonging to the Pallava line was well versed in Sanskrit as well as in Tamil and has left behind him a set of poems known as *Kshētrātiruveṇba*.²⁹

Though the ceremonial initiation and the prescribed study were not applied to women, education as such was not denied to them. The lady devotee Kāraikkāl Ammaiṃr commenced learning from the age of three and her education included the study of religious texts.³⁰ The intellectual alertness and physical courage displayed by the women of

24 1034, 1303, 1411.

25 229, 1063, 1327, 1654, 2388, 2445, 2488, 2525, 2574, 2577, 2595, 2599, 2600, 2602, 2605, 2607, 2623, 2624, 2896, 3106, 3750.

26 1063.

27 3750.

28 103-104, 152.

29 4048.

30 1719, 1721.

the age as revealed by the Periyapurāṇam go to show that the women were not inferior to men.

The administration of the country both central and local was sound and efficient and it may be attributed to the sound education and the training the officials had in their early days. The excellence attained in the realm of fine arts bespeaks the regular and systematic training the artists and craftsmen had undergone. The lower classes who did menial jobs and who tilled the soil received no particular education excepting their practical experience and knowledge of their particular craft or work.

The age of the Nayanmars was a period of considerable activity and output in regard to Tamil literature. The literature of the period was distinctly religious in character written with the sole objective of invigorating the Hindu faiths like Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism in the Tamil country, which had to face the rivalry of Buddhism and Jainism. Therefore this period may be described as the age of religious revival in the history of Tamil literature.³¹

Eight of the sixty-three Nayanmars distinguished themselves as great men of learning by their compositions. Tirumūlādēva Nayanar, popularly known as Tirumūlar, is the author of the philosophical treatise *Tirumandirāṇi*, one of the most authoritative works on *Śaiva Siddhānta*, which Sekkilar calls *Tirumandirāmālai*. *Tirumandirāṇi* occupies a unique place in Tamil philosophy and it is the earliest work in *Śaiva Siddhānta*. It consists of three thousand verses.³² Some statements in the *Pāyiram* (preface) of the work imply that Tirumūlar was the first to interpret the Sanskrit Āgamas in Tamil.³³ Āgama is also called *Tantra*

31 S. Arumuga Mudaliar, "The period of religious revival in Tamil literature", *Tamil Culture*, Vol. VI, 1957, p. 294.

32 3589-90. The exact total number of the verses vary in many editions with 3047, 3081, 3083 verses. It is widely believed by scholars that some of them are of later additions.

33 3590.

as Veda is called *Mantra* and all the several chapters in *Tirumandiram* are called *Tantras*. The three thousand and odd stanzas of the *Tirumandiram* are divided into nine *Tantras* with an introduction. It is seen that each *tantra* deals with one separate topic, but there appears at the outset to be no connection between one *Tantra* and another. Yet, a careful study will reveal the unity of thought that lies concealed in the whole book.

The list of the eight Nayanmars who contributed to the religious literature of the Tamil country includes one lady devotee, namely Kāraikkāl Ammaiār. Her compositions are included in the Eleventh *Tirumurai*. Her verses are titled as *Arpuda Tiruvandādi*, *Tiruvirattai Maṇimalai* and *Tiruvālaṅgāṭṭu mūṭta-tiruppadigam*. When Kāraikkāl Ammaiār renounced all attachments for her husband and other earthly pleasures she took the form of a demoness, who could stand by God in prayer. She then composed her first poem *Arpuda Tiruvandādi* and the second one *Tiruvirattai Maṇimalai*.³⁴ *Arpuda Tiruvandādi* consists of one hundred and one stanzas and *Tiruvirattai Maṇimalai* consists of twenty stanzas, each stanza comprising four lines. When she had the revelation of Lord Śiva at Tiruvālaṅgāḍu, she sang the *Tiruvālaṅgāṭṭu-mūṭta-tiruppadigam*.³⁵ There are two decades each comprising eleven stanzas. All these verses are remarkable for their depth of thought and lucidity of expression.

The Pallava king Aiyāḍigaḷ Kāḍavarkōṇ, after abdication went on pilgrimage to various shrines in the Tamil country and commemorated his visit by composing a poem with reference to that shrine.³⁶ It is probable that he sang numerous songs in the course of his pilgrimage but only twenty-four verses are extant. They are termed as *Kshētra-tiru-veṇba*—the Holy Poem of Sacred Places. In

34 1766–1768–1769. “*Andādi*” is a poem wherein the last word of the preceding stanza forms the first word of the next stanza.

35 1799.

36 4049–50.

all the verses the evanescence of this life and wealth is explained and a passionate appeal is made to a higher life and to the need for worshipping God in truth and love. This collection of his verses finds a place in the eleventh *Tirumurai* and next to Kāraikkāl Ammaiār's poems.

Kāri Nayanar of Tirukkaṇṇavūr was well versed in composing *Kōvai* – a kind of Tamil poetry and visited the courts of the Chēra, Chōḷa and Pāṇḍya kings and expounded the rich meaning of those songs composed by him. The collection of songs goes after his name as *Kāri Kōvai* but unfortunately those songs are not available now.³⁷

The works of Sambandar, Appar and Sundarar are commonly known as *Tēvāram* and their hymns constitute the first seven of the twelve *Tirumurais*. It may not be out of place here to give an account of the origin of the *Tēvāram* hymns.

Tradition regarding the origin of the *Tēvāram* hymns is recorded in the *Tirumuraikaṇḍa Purāṇam* by Umāpati Sivāchchāryar.³⁸ A Chōḷa king by name Abhaya Kulasekhara was a great devotee of Siva.³⁹ Prior to the incident of finding all the hymns of Sambandar, Appar and Sundarar, only a few were in use and the Chōḷa king happened to hear one of the hymns and was very much moved by the beauty of the song. He did his best to gather all the hymns but he did not succeed in his efforts to get an authentic collection of them.

At the same time, another young pious devotee by name Nambi was living in Tirunāraiūr. He belonged to the priestly class and one day his father commanded him to perform the rituals in his absence to the deity Vighnēśvara (also known as Piḷḷaiyar). In the course of the rituals Nambi offered fruits and sweet-meats as usual and earnestly pleaded with the God to take them. But seeing the Lord

37 4064-65.

38 The text of the *Tirumuraikaṇḍa Purāṇam* is found in *C. K. S. Vol. I.* pp. 33-38.

39 This Chōḷa king may be either Rājarāja I or Rājendra I K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōlas*, p. 637.

not responding he thought he had failed in his duty and hence decided to end his life by dashing his head on the floor. Immediately the Lord, pleased with his boundless devotion, partook of the offerings. Then with infinite graciousness, He taught him the scriptures and other arts.

King Kulasēkhara heard of this and being a devotee himself, rushed to Tirunāraiyyūr with rich offerings and prayed to Nambi to make them acceptable to the Lord. At the earnest appeal of Nambi the Lord partook of them.

Soon the king told Nambi of his earnest wish to trace all the hymns of the *Tēvāram* hymnists and requested him to undertake the task himself with the blessings of Lord Vighnēśvara. Nambi accordingly prayed that he might know the works and the lives of the hymnists. The Lord responded to the prayers and let Nambi know that the works of the Saivite saints were in a room to the west of the shrine of Lord Naṭarāja in Chidambaram.

The Chōḷa king and Nambi soon set out for Chidambaram. At Chidambaram the temple priests told the king and Nambi that unless the images of the hymnists came there, the room would not open. Immediately the king conducted elaborate ritual to Lord Naṭarāja and caused the images of the Three to be ceremoniously borne along and brought to the front of the room. Then the priests opened the doors and it was found that a portion of the sacred hymns written on palm leaves had been destroyed by white ants. The king was much pained at the destruction of considerable number of hymns. But suddenly was heard the Divine voice saying that only that portion of the sacred hymns fit for the times had been preserved and the rest purposely destroyed. All were delighted at this, and at the king's request Nambi made a masterly compilation of the *Tēvāram* hymns which form the first seven of the twelve *Tirumūṟais*.

The substratum of fact in this legend is that most of the hymns were then available at Chidambaram. This also may be said to explain the special significance attached to Chidambaram as the most important among the sacred centres north of the Kāviri.

It is certain that the *Tēvāram* hymns ceased to be popular immediately after the times of the hymnists but, as the above incident would reveal, some staunch Śaivites took care to write them down on palm leaf and preserve them in temples. It is also definitely known that many hymns were lost. The *Periyapurānam* itself refers to a number of hymns composed by Appar, Sambandar and Sundarar during their itineraries.⁴⁰ No trace of many of these hymns are found in the extant collections. Further, a less known hymn of Sambandar has been preserved in an epigraph found in the Siva temple at Tiruviḍaivai.⁴¹

The term *Tēvāram* is not used by Sekkilar who only speaks of the hymns as *Tiruppatikam* or *Tamiḷ Mālai*.⁴² Neither the hymnists themselves nor Nambi Āṇḍār Nambi who canonised the Śaiva literature assigned the title *Tēvāram* to these hymns. The name *Tirumuṟai* itself is not found in earlier inscriptions. The inscriptions use only the term *Tiruppadiyam* which is only *Tiruppatikam* used by Sekkilar.⁴³ The earliest mention of the word *Tēvāram* is found in the *Ēkāmbaranātharulā* composed by Twin poets

40 Sambandar - 2028, 2188, 2297, 2370, 2471, 2520; 2899, 3052, 3106.

Appar - 1400, 1457, 1482, 1528, 1595, 1597, 1676, Sundarar - 262.

41 8 of 1918.

42 *Tiruppatikam* - 1380, 1438, 1589, 1649, 1978, 2065, 2135, 2216, 2313, 2443, 2522, 2652, 2778, 2865, 2928, 3023, 3106, 3220, 3307, 3430, 3536, 3683, 3834, 3917, 4279.

Tamiḷ Mālai - 1391, 1458, 1527, 1651, 2025, 2148, 2220, 2331, 2459, 2521, 2636, 2789, 2847, 3021, 3197, 3217, 3305, 3448, 3536, 3832, 4267.

43 41 of 1891, 141 of 1895, 333 of 1906, 624 of 1909, 255 of 1916, 275, 280, 321 of 1917, 40, 349 of 1918, 99, 104 of 1928-29, 146, 149 of 1936-37, 290 of 1938-39.

In the inscriptions some related terms like *Tēvāra-Nāyagam* (97 of 1931-32) are found. The word *Tēvāram* in such contexts only meant 'worship'. T. V.

who are believed to have lived in the middle of the fourteenth century A. D.⁴⁴ So it may be said that the term *Tēvāram* was applied to the hymns at least from the middle of the fourteenth century.

The *Tēvāram* hymns of Sambandar constitute the first three *Tirumuṟais* having 384 *padigams*. The hymns of Appar go to form the next three *Tirumuṟais* with a total of 312 *padigams*. The hymns of Sundarar which number 100 are grouped as the Seventh *Tirumuṟai*.⁴⁵

Each *padigām* has ten or eleven stanzas and each *padigam* is sung in one particular shrine visited by the Nayanmars during the course of their extensive pilgrimages. Of the *padigams* there are also a few which are not attributed to any one shrine but of a general character and they are known as *podu padigam*.

These seven collections form the compilation called *Tēvāram*. They occupy a unique position not merely due to the melody of their music but also to the emotional expression, religious fervour and literary excellence.

Kaḷaṟiṟṟarivār Nayanar popularly known as Chēramān Perumāḷ Nayanar, coming in the line of Chēra kings, distinguished himself by composing three pieces at different times and places. They are *Ponvaṇṇattandādi*, *Tiruvārūr Tirumummaṇikkōvai* and *Tirukkailāya Tiruñānavula*. *Pon-*

Sadasiva Pandarattar "Tēvāram ennum peyarvaḷakku", *Sen Tamiḷ Selvi*, Vol. 23, pp. 305-310.

M. Rajamanickam, "Iraṇḍām Tirumuṟai", *Tirukkōil*, Sep. 1964, p. 594.

44 T. V. Sadasiva Pandarathar, *op. cit.*, pp. 305-310.

45 According to tradition it is believed that the hymnists composed many more verses.

Sambandar is said to have composed 16,000 hymns.

Appar is said to have composed 49,000 hymns.

Sundarar is said to have composed 38,000 hymns.

Though the numbers may be found very exaggerating, it is well known that many hymns were lost in those days when they were written on cadjan leaves and exposed to white ant.

vaṇṇattandādi was composed at Chidambaram by Chēramān Perumāl Nayanar soon after his worship of Lord Naṭarāja.⁴⁶ It consists of one hundred verses in *andādi* metre. After offering his prayer along with Sundarar at Tiruvārūr temple, he sang the *Tiruvārūr Tirumummanikkōvai* comprising thirty stanzas of varying length in the *veṇba*, *kaṭṭalaikalitturai* and *nērisaiyāsiriappā* metres.⁴⁷ The third one *Tirukkailāya Tiruñānanavula* was composed by the Nayanar on his way to Kailāyam, the abode of Śiva, and is in the form of a single verse having 199 lines in the *ulā* form of poetry.⁴⁸

Thus Tamil literary activity may be said to have flourished at the time of the Nayanmars. Religion formed the basis of most of the works because it was a period of conflict of the Hindu faiths like Saivism and Vaishṇavism with the heterodox faiths like Jainism and Buddhism. They are all works of devotion, and each verse could be regarded as some form of prayer addressed to Śiva in various moods as circumstances necessitated.⁴⁹ Therefore the Nayanmars may be said to have done the dual task of reviving Saivism and of enriching Tamil literature.

46 3803.

47 3816.

48 4275.

49 S. Krishnaswamy Aiyangar, *Some contributions of South India to Indian Culture*, p. 242.

“The Art of India is the image and vehicle of her thought and civilisation. It cannot be rightly understood and interpreted without an appreciation of the inner life and vision of the Indian people.”¹ What is true of India as a whole is certainly true of the Tamil country. Art reflects the inner vision of man. Art is either static or dynamic. Static arts are those of human expression through the media of architecture, sculpture, iconography and painting. Dynamic arts are arts of movement and rhythm, such as music and dancing.

ARCHITECTURE

In India architecture is mainly associated with temples. Architecture of temple clearly manifest the spiritual longings of the people. “Unlike the Egyptian art which exhibits intensive love of immortality, and the Assyrio-Babylonian which is the outward expression of an imperialistic aggression and love of splendour, Indian art is a fervid longing after spiritual perfection and the realisation of the infinite in the finite”².

Of all the institutions of Southern India the most important was the temple. The Tamils were great architects and the structure of temples bespeaks the advancement of Tamil architecture through the ages. The building of temples had a steady and gradual development.

There are two views on the early history of architecture in India. One set of scholars are of the opinion that the temples came into existence only in the time of the Mauryas

- 1 R. Mukerjee, *The flowering of Indian Art*, p. v.
- 2 V. Raghavendra Rao, “South Indian Temples”, *Q. J. M. S.*, Vol. 23, 1932, 33, p. 2.

and that they were modelled after the Buddhist *vihāras*. These scholars base their view on the basis of absence of the existence of pre-Buddhist or pre-Jain Hindu temples.³ Another set of scholars are of the view that Hindu temples existed even before the coming of Buddhist *vihāras* and they adduce evidence from both Buddhistic and Brahmanic literature.⁴

The fact that temples existed in the Tamil country in the *Saṅgam* period is proved by evidence from the *Saṅgam* literature as well as from the epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharatha*.⁵ In *Ṣilappadikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai* there is reference to temples dedicated not only to Śiva but also to Lord Muruga, Lord Balarāma and Lord Viṣṇu.⁶ But not a single temple belonging to this period survived for the simple reason that the structure was of perishable materials. Many temples that have been visited by the *Tēvāram* hymnists were also built of ordinary bricks and other perishable material. These temples were reconstructed with stone in the time of the later Chōḷas and this is proved by inscriptions available to us.⁷

The present temple architecture in South India may be said to have originated in the time of the Pallavas. The absence of any temple belonging to a date prior to the seventh century A. D. and the construction of a large

- 3 Franc Macshane, *Many Golden Ages*, pp. 105-106.
K. R. Subramanian, "The Origin of Saivism and its History in the Tamil land", *Journal of the Madras University*, Vol. I, Supplement, p. 54.
- 4 N. Venkata Ramanayya, *An Essay on the Origin of the South Indian temple*, p. 39.
- 5 M. Rajamanickam, *Saiva Samaya Valarchchi*, p. 22.
- 6 *Ṣilappadikaram*-Kāḍai v, 11.169-172, Kāḍai xiv, 11. 7-10. *Maṇimēkalai*-Kāḍai i, 11. 54-55.
- 7 1b of 1890, 122 of 1895 to 125 of 1195, 91, 92 and 98 of 1895, 231 of 1910, 157 of 1911, 51 of 1914, 455 of 1917, 126 of 1925, 141 of 1926, 9 and 10 of 1914.
M. E. R. 1909, p. 86; 1911, p. 64, 70, 1913, p. 84, 1913, p. 96; 1915, p. 96, 1920, p. 101.

number of temples following this period lend support to the above view.⁸ It is felt therefore certain that temples existed in the pre-Pallava period but they were of perishable material such as bricks, mortar and wood. This is also proved by the Maṇḍagappaṭṭu inscription of Mahendra-varman I, who caused temples to be constructed without the use of bricks, timber, metals and mortar.⁹ Early Pallava kings were the first to introduce rock-cut temples in South India.

Elaborate rules have been laid down in the ancient *Āgamas* and *Śilpasastras* regarding the construction of temples. The erection of the central shrine known as '*garbha-griha*' alone consisted of six '*vargas*' or stages.¹⁰ They are namely, *Adiṣṭāna vargam*, *Pāda vargam*, *Prastāna vargam*, *Kēla vargam*, *Sikara vargam* and *Stūpi vargam*. Sekkilar describes in detail these stages when he gives an account of the temple built by Pūsalār Nayanar.¹¹ After gathering all the necessary material and man power, an auspicious day was chosen for laying the foundation stone. The Nayanar completed all the stages of the central shrine with great care and then built the compound wall around the temple. He also made arrangements for a well and a tank to be dug in the precincts of the temple. Finally an auspicious day was fixed for installing the presiding deity '*Śiva Liṅga*' at the central shrine.¹²

It is interesting to note the other parts of a temple also. The *garbha-griha* opens into the '*ardhamāṇḍapa*', a small ante-room narrower than the *garbha-griha* itself and connecting it in turn with the '*mukamāṇḍapa*', a pillared hall or portico where the best ornamented work of the

8 N. Venkata Ramanayya, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

9 *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XVII, p. 14.

10 M. V. M. Nagaraja Gurukkal, "Tirukkōil amaippu muṟai", *Tirukkōil*, August 1963 pp. 525-528.

11 Pūsalār Nayanar actually built a temple for Lord Śiva at his heart only and still he strictly followed the rules of construction as laid down in the scriptures.

12 4176-78

temple can be seen. In the *mukhamanḍapa* or just outside it, will be placed the image of the deity's vehicle – 'Nandi', the sacred bull in Śiva temples.¹³ After the *Nandi* there will be two raised platforms, one behind the other, on one of which is placed the flagstaff or '*dvaja stamba*' made of stone, wood or metal and on the other is offered what is called '*Sribali*', sacrificial cooked food and flowers. The temple precincts are usually enclosed by a wall, the gateways of which are marked by pyramidal towers known as '*gōpurams*'.

Besides these usual features in all temples, some had elaborate additional structures. Hundred-pillared *maṇḍapas* and thousand-pillared *maṇḍapas* are only of later origin.¹⁴ But in the age of the Nayanmars there are references to the existence of *maṇḍapas* meant for specific purposes. In the Tiruvārūr temple there exists a *maṇḍapa* known as '*Dēvāsiriyan maṇḍapam*', where devotees spent their time in meditation, prayer and other rituals.¹⁵ In praise of these devotees Sundarar composed his '*Truṭṭonḍa-t-togai*'. There was also a separate *maṇḍapam* where the flowers were gathered and made into garlands for temple rituals, which is known as '*Tiruppūmaṇḍapam*'.¹⁶ Sekkilar in describing the city of Tiruvorriyūr mentions the existence of separate *maṇḍapas* where (*Tēvāram*) *Tiruppadikams* were recited.¹⁷ The temple plans always included a provision for a tank in the precincts of the temple and the water in it is regarded

13 1057.

14 S. R. Balasubrahmanyam, "The hundred-pillared Mandapam", *Q. J. M. S.*, Vol. 22, 1931-32, pp. 289-290.

15 137, 270, 301, 335, 497, 1486, 1489, 2407, 3466, 3815. The *Dēvāsiriyan Maṇḍapam* in the time of the Nayanmars must have been different in size from what it is to-day. It is enveloped in the thousand pillared *maṇḍapa*. Numerous bare stone pillars are also found in rows in front of the *Dēvāsiriyan Maṇḍapam* and they are used during festive occasions to put temporary thatched sheds.

16 4100, 4123-24.

17 4024.

to be holy. The size of the tank varied in proportion to the prominence of the temple. The purpose of the tank may be said to provide water for devotees to clean themselves before entering the temple. The tanks were kept clean by proper draining of dirty water and by filling with fresh water. In the Periyapurānam there is reference to devotees themselves taking up the renovation work of the steps of the tank and also the task of deepening it.¹⁸

Sambandar and Appar, who lived in the seventh century A. D. went on pilgrimage to the Śiva temples situated all over the Tamil country and have left hymns in praise of 219 and 125 temples respectively. (52 shrines have hymns of both Sambandar and Appar). They have also mentioned the names of few other temples for which there are no hymns. Those shrines are known by the term 'Vaiputtalams'. Therefore it is certain that there existed atleast three hundred temples in the time of Sambandar and Appar.

The fact that there were different kinds of temples as early as in the time of Appar is proved by a *Tēvāram* hymn composed by him.¹⁹ 'Perum Kōil' which is also known as 'Māḍakkōil' is the one built on high platforms, well above the ground level. It is not correct to identify them as storeyed temples.²⁰ But they are all constructed on high platforms with a view, it is said, to prevent the destruction of temple by elephants. These had entrances only on the sides and not at the front as can be seen in the appended illustration.²¹

A Chōḷa king by name Kōchcheṅgaṇān, one of the sixty-three Nayanmars, is said to have built seventy-eight such temples in the Tamil country.²² Of the seventy-eight temples built by Kōchcheṅgaṇān only a few exist. In the

18 3595.

19 6: 71: 5.

20 K. R. Subramanian, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

21 Illustration No. 3.

22 4208. K. V. Subrahmanya Aiyar, *Historical Sketches of Ancient Dekhan*, p. 187.

Periyapurānam there is reference to such '*Māḍakkōils*' in the following places:- Tiruvambar, Vaigal, Tirunallūr, Paḷayāṟai Vaḍataḷi, Tiruvaḷandūr, Tiruttalaichchaṅgaḍu, Tiruvākkūr, Tirunannilam, Kilvaḷur, Tiruttaṇḍalainīneri.²³ It is probable that other temples have perished in course of time.

'*Karakkōil*' denotes the temple which has the *garbha-griha* in the form of a chariot with wheels. A temple of this type exists at Kaḍambūr (Chidambaram Taluk, South Arcot District) and it is sung by Sambandar and Appar in their hymns. Appar makes a specific reference to this type of temple in one of his verses.²⁴ In the present temple stone-horses are represented as drawing the chariot.²⁵

Whenever renovation took place in the temple including that part of the *garbha-griha* then the presiding deity was removed to a temporarily erected shrine near the main shrine. The temporary shrine is known as '*Iḷaṅkōil*'. There is reference to the existence of such a temple in the Periyapurānam at Miyaichchūr and Appar has sung a hymn in praise of this shrine.²⁶ There is also inscriptional evidence to the existence of an '*Iḷaṅkōil*' in the Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh.²⁷

'*Maṇikkōil*' probably denotes the temple having huge bell-shaped domes. Sekkilar describes the temple at Tiruvārūr as *Maṇikkōil*.²⁸ Sambandar calls the temple at Maḍurai also as *Maṇikkōil*.²⁹

23 2430, 2330, 1478, 1559, 2332, 2017, 2435, 3210, 2365, 2473.

24 2150, 3265, 5:19:9.

25 Illustration No. 4

26 2435.

27 S. I. I., Vol. XII, No. 43. The Inscription is found in the Padmāvathi Amman temple at Tiruchchōkinūr in Chandragiri taluk in Chittor district. It is assigned to A. D. 825 (Vijaya Tanti Vikravarmān).

28 1488. M. A. [Dorai Rangaswamy, "Rise of Temple cult in Saivism with special reference to Tēvāram", *Annals of Oriental Research*, 1954-55, Vol. XII, p. 7.

29 3: 149; 3839.

The *garbha-griha* of certain temples resembled the elephant in lying posture and these are termed as '*Tūṅgānai-māḍam*'. In the Periyapurānam a temple of this type is said to exist at Tiruppenṇāgaḍam.³⁰ The *vimāna* is designed in the apsidal form and hence the name. These are known as '*Gajapriṣṭha vimānas*' in Sanskrit.

The temple in the Tamil country appears to have been a major institution from very early times. It was apparently the single institution to preserve a certain tradition of great vitality and it was also the only permanent institution to act as a cementing force on the various component communities of the country. In short it was the centre of all cultural activities. The fine arts such as iconography, sculpture, music and dance were fostered and nourished by the temples.

SCULPTURE

Sculpture is closely associated with architecture. Temple precincts were decorated with a variety of sculptural representations depicting stories from Purāṇas and illustrating innumerable mythologies. Lives of the Nayanmars figuring in the Periyapurānam are found in large numbers at two places namely Kaḍambūr, Karakkōil and Airāvātēśvarar Kōil at Dārāsuram.³¹ At the Airāvātēśvarar Kōil the lives of almost all the sixty-three Nayanmars are artistically carved on the walls of the central shrine.³² Thus the Periyapurānam supplied interesting themes for sculptures and paintings in the temples, especially those built after the Periyapurānam.

ICONOGRAPHY

The employment of an external object to concentrate the mind upon the act of worship resulted in image worship. It is very difficult to trace the origin of iconographic

30 V 1414, 2082. Illustration Fig. No. 5.

31 M. Rajamanickam, *The development of S'aivism in South India*, pp. 191-193.

32 A. R. E., 1920, p/ 102-107.

worship in India. Some believe it to be the outcome of the followers of Gautama Buddha adoring their master and worshipping him in the form of images.³³ However, there are also evidences to support the prevalence of image worship among the Hindus prior to the time of Gautama Buddha.

So far as South India is concerned it is definitely known that *Liṅga* worship existed by second century B. C. ³⁴ *Ahaṇṇūru* describes the worship of a pillar named as 'kandu' made of wood, perhaps in the form of *Liṅga*.³⁵ In *Puraṇānūru* also there is reference to the idol worship of Gods like Lord Siya, Lord Kaṇṇan, Lord Baladēva and Lord Mūruḡa.³⁶ Lord Viṣṇu in the recumbent posture in a temple at Kāñchipuram is mentioned in *Perumpāṇāṟrup-paḍai*.³⁷

The Periyapurāṇam also has strong evidence to support the view of the prevalence of idol worship from the beginning of the Christian era. Two of the earliest Nayanmars Kaṇṇappa Nayanar and Saṇḍēsura Nayanar worshipped Siva in the shape of *Liṅga*. Kaṇṇappa Nayanar came across the *Liṅga* on top of the Kāḷatti hill during his hunt and it follows that *Liṅga* worship was in vogue for quite long a time prior to Kaṇṇappa Nayanar.³⁸ Saṇḍēsura Nayanar who took to the care of cattle, delighted in anointing *Liṅga* with pots of milk when he took the cows for grazing.³⁹

It is quite probable that Sambandar and Appar who sang the praise of those Nayanmars who lived many years before them had the images of those Nayanmars as objects of worship and reverence. So also when Sekkilar composed the Periyapurāṇam the images of the sixty-three Nayanmars might have become popular and widely kept and

33 T. Gopinatha Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, pp. 1-5.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

35 Stanza No. 287.

36 Stanza No. 106.

37 1. 262.

38 745.

39 1240.

worshipped in all temples. There is inscriptional evidence to show the presence of metal images of the *Tēvāram* hymnists in the ninth century A. D.⁴⁰ In later times many endowments were also made for the upkeep and performance of rituals to the images of the Nayanmars in various shrines.⁴¹ During festivals like *Vasanta Viḷa*, *Mahānavami* and *Tiruvādirai* to which there are references in the *Periarpuranam*, idols were taken out in procession around the temple

PAINTING

In the art of painting also the Tamils had acquired a high degree of proficiency from early times. There is reference to painting *Naṟṟinai* in and the painter is called '*vallōṉ*' in *Paripāḍal*.⁴² There is also literary evidence to show the variety of paintings of Gods, men and animals in temples, Jain Paḷlis and dwelling houses.⁴³ But they all disappeared with the destruction of the buildings wherein they were painted.

At present paintings of the Pallava and later Chōḷa periods are available but they are very few. In the Kailāsa-nātha temple at Kāñchipuram there are still traces of Pallava paintings on sculptured panels in the *prakāra*. Though there is no reference to painting in the *Periarpuranam*, it is quite interesting to note that scenes from the lives of some Nayanmars are painted on the walls of the *prakāra* of the central shrine of the Brihadēśvara temple at Tañjāvūr. The scenes depict certain incidents from the life of Sundarar such as the preparation for his wedding, Siva claiming Sundarar as his slave, Sundarar's bosom friend Chēramān Perumāḷ Nayanar following him to Kailās on horse back, dance of the '*apsaras*' at Kailās, Sundarar and Chērmān Perumāḷ worshipping Lord Siva and the revelation of Siva with His consort to the devotees. These scenes are said to

40 S. I. I., Vol. II. No. 38.

41 56 of 1927.

42 *Naṟṟinai* stanza No. 118, 146, 177, 182, 268.
Paripāḍal 21 : 27-28.

43 *Kalaikkalañṇiyam*, Vol. II, pp. 742-743.

have been painted during the reign of Rāja Rāja Chōla.⁴⁴ This shows that the lives of Nayanmars must have been popular even before the time of Kulōttuṅga II during whose reign Sekkilar composed the Periyapurānam.

MUSIC

Music is the harmony of sound which unites all beings. The popular term given to music in Tamil literature is 'Isai'.⁴⁵ Music was closely associated with the life of the Tamils. Whether it was an occasion of joy or sorrow, suitable music was played. The young and the old, the rich and the poor, the educated and the ignorant, the householder and the saint – each knew the music pertaining to his own calling and needs.

That the art of music was highly developed by the Tamils in the *Saṅgam* age is well attested by references to musical notes and instruments in the *Saṅgam* literature. 'Paṇ' is the name given to the 'rāga' by the ancient Tamils. The word 'Paṇ' is attributed to a 'rāga' or musical note containing seven 'Svaras' or notes. In Tamil music the seven notes are *Iḷi*, *Uḷai*, *Viḷḷi*, *Tāram*, *Kuḷal*, *Tuttam* and *Kaikkilāḷ* corresponding to *Saṭjam*, *Rishabam*, *Gāndāram*, *Maddimam*, *Pañchamam*, *Daivatam*, and *Nishāḍam* of the present South Indian classical system. A *rāga* having less than seven *svaras* is known as 'Tiram'.⁴⁶

In the *Saṅgam* literature the total number of *Paṇs* is given as one hundred and three. The *Paṇs* in those times were assigned on the regional basis. The five prominent *Paṇs* - *Kuṟiñji*, *Pālai*, *Mullai*, *Marudam* and *Neidal* – corres-

44 S. K. Govindaswamy, "The Frescoes of the Brahadēśwara Temple at Tanjore", *Journal of the Annamalai University*, Vol. II, 1933, pp. 2-8.

45 In Tamil there is a three fold classification – 'Iyal' – literary Tamil, 'Isai' – music as also poetry and 'Nāṭakam' – dance as well as drama.

46 951. L. Isaac, *Ancient Tamil Music*, p. 24.

pond to the five geographical divisions of the country.⁴⁷ These in their turn had several sub-divisions. There are also innumerable references to the variety of musical instrument in the *Saṅgam* works. The most celebrated instrument was the 'Yāl' and the experts in playing them formed a class by themselves and are known by the name 'Pāṇar'.⁴⁸ Each of the five geographical regions had its own Yāl. Details of the technique of music are found in *Silappadikāram*.⁴⁹

Music as the medium of approach to the almighty, gave solace to many souls caught in the whirlpool of worldly affairs. Even though there are many modes of appeal, yet it is well known that music is the best. To gain control over the wandering mind and thought and to concentrate on God there is nothing else so effective as music. It is because music had the power to control the five senses and allow the mind to focus the thought on God. Great philosophical truths could not be understood by the people unless they are expressed in simple terms, and so suitable literature forms were devised for the purpose. These verses conveying religious truths in plain words set to simple tunes could be understood and appreciated by the people easily.

The *Tēvāram* hymns were set to music in twenty-four *Paṇs*. According to some scholars in music, the *Tēvāram* hymns were set to music in twenty-one *Paṇs* only.⁵⁰ It is significant that almost all the original *Paṇs* are extant

47 *Ahanānūru*, stanza No. 102.

N. Chēngalvarayan, "Music and musical instruments of the Ancient Tamils", *Q. J. M. S.*, Vol. 26, 1935-36, p. 81.

48 *Kuṟuntogai* - 323 - 326.

Naṟṟinai - 38, 40.

49 *Araṅgēṟṟu kādai*, *Kānal vari*, *Vēṇir Kādai*, *Aichchiyar Kuravai*, *Kuṇṟak Kuravai*, *Vēṟṟuva vari*.

50 S. Ponnottuvar, "Tēvārappangal" *Journal of the Annamalai University*, 1932, Vol. I, pp. 225 - 230.

now. On the other hand it may be said that *Paṇs* have also been immortalised by these hymns.⁵¹

The twenty-four *Paṇs* of the *Tēvāram* hymns are divided into '*Pahal*' (day) *Paṇs*, '*Iravu*' (night) *Paṇs* and '*Podu*' (common) *Paṇs*.⁵² Thus *Paṇs* were assigned a particular time in a day to be made use of while

51 R. Brinda, *The Origin and development of sacred music*, p. 109.

52 The following table shows the time and the corresponding *Paṇ* to be set in tune :

PAHAL PANS - 12

Time measured in <i>Nāḷigai</i>		Name of the <i>Paṇ</i>	
0 - 3	...	Puṇanīrmai	
3 - 6	...	Kāṇḍāram, Piyandai	
6 - 9	...	Kausikam	
9 - 12	...	Indaḷam, Tirukkuṇṭogai	
12 - 15	...	Takkēsi	
15 - 18	...	Nāṭṭarāgam, Sādāri	
18 - 21	...	Nāṭṭapāḍai	
21 - 24	...	Paḷampaṇichuram	
24 - 27	...	Kāṇḍārapaṇichuram	
27 - 30	...	Paṇchamam	

IRAVU PANS-9

Time measured in <i>Nāḷigai</i>		Name of the <i>Paṇ</i>	
30 —	33 $\frac{3}{4}$	...	Takkarāgam
33 $\frac{3}{4}$ —	37 $\frac{1}{2}$	...	Paḷantakkarāgam
37 $\frac{1}{2}$ —	41 $\frac{1}{4}$	...	Sikāmaram
41 $\frac{1}{4}$ —	45	...	Kolli
45 —	48 $\frac{3}{4}$	...	Viyāḷakkuṇiṇji
48 $\frac{3}{4}$ —	52 $\frac{1}{2}$	...	Mēkarāgakuṇiṇji
52 $\frac{1}{2}$ —	56 $\frac{1}{4}$	...	Kuṇiṇji
56 $\frac{1}{4}$ —	60	...	Andāḷikkuṇiṇji

These *Paṇs* should be sung only at the proper times and it was thought a great sin to sing them out of time.

The following are the two *Podu* (common) *Paṇs* which may be sung irrespective of time :

Sevvaḷi and Senduruṭṭi.

singing these hymns. *Tiuttāṇḍakam*, a kind of poetical composition of Appar, has no definite *Paṇ* assigned and may be sung as '*rāgamālika*' at any time.⁵³

The hymnists chose the *Paṇ* appropriate to the time of their visit to the shrine when they composed the hymns. Sekkilar gives a minute and detailed account of all the pilgrimages undertaken by the *Tēvāram* trio in their life time. Sekkilar also makes reference to the particular *padigam* sung at a shrine when he narrated the visit of the Nayanar concerned. Many such hymns sung in different shrines are not available now. It is probable that those hymns might have been lost as mentioned earlier.⁵⁴

There are many references in the Periyapurānam to the rich variety of musical instruments in the Tamil country. The instruments were broadly divided into three kinds '*tōr-karuvi*' or percussion instruments, '*tuḷaikkaruvi*' or wind instruments and '*narambukkaruvi*' or stringed instruments.⁵⁵

Of the four kinds, the percussion instruments were represented most and were largely used for all occasions. There were drums used for battle, for sacrifices, for weddings, for funerals and for other festivals. The following varieties of

53 1440, 1456, 1487, 1653, 1655, 1669, 1672, 1679, 1688, 1692, 3027.

54 For the origin of *Tēvāram* vide Chapter *Education and Literature* pp 166-167.

Some classify the musical instruments into four groups. To the above said three they add '*miḍaṇṇukkaruvi*' or throat instruments.

"The throat instruments may be conceived to be the flute, reed and possibly tambourine may also be included in the category as it simply helps the vocal music".

N. Chengalvarayan, "Music and musical instruments of the Ancient Tamils" *Q.J.M.S.*, Vol. 26, 1935-36, p. 82.

Some others classify the musical instruments into five groups. To the above mentioned four they add '*Kaṇjakkaruvi*' or the '*Kaittālam*', made of bell metal to keep the *tāla*.

L. Isaac. *op.cit.* pp.56-57.

drums are referred to in the Periyapurānam: *Akuli*, *Sillarituḍi*, *Arikkuṟuntuḍi*, *Sirupaṟai*, *Uḍukkai*, *Muḷavu*, *Kōḍu*, *Murasu*, *Tambaṭṭam*, and *Mattaḷam*.⁵⁶ They were named differently on account of the peculiar sounds they produced.

The flute was the most popular of the wind instruments used by the people. Since it was made of bamboo it took the name of *pullāṇkuḷal* in Tamil.⁵⁷ Flute was made of other varieties of wood as well as metals. But bamboo is considered the most suitable material for making flute.

The shepherd-saint Ānāya Nayanar attained bliss by playing the '*Pañcākshara*' over his flute.⁵⁸ Sekkilar gives a detailed account of the way Ānāya Nayanar himself made the flute with great technical care and of how he played on it with an excellent blend of all musical notes. The right variety of bamboo was chosen according to the specifications found in musical treatises. The required length was cut carefully and the seven holes for the seven notes were made with a gap of an inch in between two holes. Thus a flaw-less bamboo flute was made and the Nayanar tested it by playing the notes on it according to the grammar of music.⁵⁹

Enchanted by the natural surroundings in the *mullai* or forest the Nayanar was reminded of God Śiva and instantly commenced playing the '*Pañcākshara*'. He started with the '*Kurinji*' *Pañ* and then went on elaborating the '*Mullai*' *Pañ* and the '*Koḍi Pālai*' *Pañ*.' He also exhibited his superb skill on playing in five different pitches namely *Āyattam*, *Eḍuppu*, *Ukkiram*, *Saṅchāram* and *Īḍayam* and also in incorporating the four *Rāga* combinations namely *Pañ*, *Paṇṇiyal-Tiṟam*, *Tiṟam* and *Tiṟatiṟam*.⁶⁰ The music produced was so touching that he seemed to pour forth his soul with the aid of the flute. All his herd of cows

56 654, 663, 687, 1341, 1641 721, 1341.

57 82, 687.

58 926-966.

59 938, 949.

60 950-951.

enchanted by the divine music gathered around him and even the hungry calves listened to the music rather than feed themselves from their mothers. Other animals and wild beasts enchanted by the melody of his flute stood thrilled by the music departing from the routine of grazing and hunting. The avowed enemies in wild life such as elephants and lions and peacocks and snakes were so enthralled by the sweet melody that forgetting their enmity they stood together listening to the music. This soul stirring music reached Lord Siva's ears and He being pleased with His devotee, called him to heaven to stay there for ever.⁶¹

The chief stringed instrument was the *Yāl*. There were many varieties of it, one for each of the five regions.⁶² The number of strings in the *Yāl* varied from four to seven, fourteen, sixteen, seventeen, nineteen, twenty-one, one hundred and one thousand. The seven stringed *Yāl* was called. *Seṅgoṭṭiyāl* and the nine stringed was called *Tumburu Yāl*. *Sakōḍayāl* consisted of fourteen strings. It is also said that there was another *Yāl* known as *Ādi Yāl* or *Peruṅkalan* which consisted of one thousand strings. *Kitchchaga Yāl* is said to have had one hundred strings.⁶³ Tirunilakanta *Yāl* *ṣpāṇar* is said to have played on *Sakōḍayāl*.⁶⁴

One of the sixty-three Nayanmars by name Tirunilakanta *Yālppāṇar*, a contemporary and intimate friend of Sambandar, was an expert on the *Yāl*.⁶⁵ His wife *Madaṅgasūlāmaṇi* was a seasoned vocalist and she always accompanied the Nayanar wherever he went.⁶⁶ The Nayanar and his wife went to *Sirkāḷi* to meet Sambandar. It is said that Sambandar himself went to the outskirts of the city and extended a warm welcome to the Nayanar and his wife. The Nayanar delighted Sam-

61 954-965.

62 221, 237, 1115, 1341, 2029, 4215.

63 L. Isaac, *Ancient Tamil Music*, pp. 63-65.

64 1858.

65 As his name indicates he belonged to the family of experts on *Yāl*.

66 2029.

bandar by playing his hymns on the *Yāl*. Thereafter he accompanied Sambandar on his pilgrimages and continued to play the hymns on his *Yāl*.⁶⁷ But at Dharmapuram it so happened that Tirunīlakaṇṭha Yālpānar was not able to set in tune a hymn sung by Sambandar. On realising his inability to set the tune he lost his temper and was about to thrash the *Yāl*. But it is said that Sambandar pacified the Nayanar and in the end he succeeded in playing the hymn.⁶⁸ The Nayanar lived with Sambandar and attained bliss along with Sambandar at Tirunallūrpperumaṇam.⁶⁹

There are references in the Periyapurānam to tribal music and martial music. In the Kaṇṇappa Nayanar Purānam, Sekkilar describes in detail the various instruments such as *Kombu*, *Sillapittuḍi*, *Tuḍi*, *Uḍukkai Aṇikuṇḍaḍi* and *Pambai* sounded when the Nayanar went for his maiden hunt.⁷⁰ Martial music provided on the battle front came from the instruments like *Sanḡu*, *Tārai*, *Kālam*, *Bēri*, *Pambai*, *Kaṇḍai*, *Periyataḍi*, *Timilai* and *Taṭṭi*.⁷¹

DANCE

The art of dance is closely linked with the art of music. Dance and music are complementary arts. Dance

67 2029, 2037, 2038, 2066, 2342, 2343.

68 2345, 2346, 2350.

69 3148, 4225.

70 654, 663, 687, 713, 721.

71 581.

It is interesting to note that the lives of the Periyapurānam Nayanmars are verified and set to simple music in the form of 'Kirtanas' with *rāga*, *tāla*, *pallavi*, *anupallavi* and *charanam* by the noted musician Ramaswami Sivan of the last century. Though the work was published printed copies are unfortunately not available at present. It is said that except a few almost all the compositions are lost. S. Ramanathan, "Survey of the Traditions of Music, Dance and Drama in the Madras State", *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures*, 1960, Part II, pp. 220-221.

consists in the rhythmical movement of any or all parts of the body in accordance with some scheme of individual or concerted actions which is expressive of emotions or ideas. Almost every incident of life had its appropriate dance.

In the Tamil country dancing was in vogue from early times and there were text books in which rules were given in detail for the performance of the several kinds of dance. These books are not now extant but abundant information regarding dancing is available from the *Saṅgam* literature. *Kuṟuntogai* refers to women dancers as '*Āḍukaḷa-māgai*' and men dancers as '*Āḍukaḷamagan*'. A class of dancers by name '*Kūttar*' performed *Tuṇaṅgaikkūttu* a kind of dance-drama.⁷² In the *Araṅgēṟṟū Kāḍai* of *Śilappadikāram* we get information about the auditorium, stage, dance-master, musical accompaniments and the qualities of the dancer.⁷³

'Kūttu' is the Tamil term for dance. *Kuṟavaikkūttu*, *Varikkūttu*, *Tuṇaṅgaikkūttu* and *Sarigai* are some of the kinds of dances that are referred to in the *Periyapurānam*. *Kuṟavaikkūttu* was performed in honour of Lord Muruga by the hunters of Uḍuppur in Pottappi Nāḍu.⁷⁴ *Kuṟavaikkūttu* is a kind of dance performed in a circle. The birth of Kaṇṇappa Nayanar was celebrated exuberantly and the men and women of the tribe performed the *Varikkūttu* and *Tuṇaṅgaikkūttu* respectively.⁷⁵ *Varikkūttu* is a kind of masquerade dance while *Tuṇaṅgaikkūttu* is a kind of dance in which the arms bent at the elbows are made to strike against the sides. To show to the world that Appar was a true devotee above this worldly attachments and pleasures, Lord Siva sent dancing maidens to dance before Appar at Tiruppugalūr and thereby attempt to create in him a desire for worldly pleasures. The dancing girls came like the lightning that struck the ground from the sky. They sang appropriate notes to the movement of their body. Their

72 *Kuṟuntogai*, stanza. No. 78.

73 *Kāḍai* III.

74 660.

75 688.

feet resembled the tender leaves of the trees and their fingers looked like the flowers of the water-lily. They performed '*sārigai*' a variety of dance wherein the dancers went round and round and performed various delicate '*abhinayas*'. They strew flowers as they danced and tried their best to distract Appar by their performance.⁷⁶

Thus an account of the temple architecture, sculpture, iconography, painting, music and dance in relation to the Periyapurānam, reveals the extent to which the Tamils had attained supreme excellence and perfection in various fine arts. A study of the Periyapurānam reveals one underlying factor viz., that all aspects of fine arts are closely linked with religion.

An attempt has been made in the preceding pages to draw an integrated picture of the culture of the Tamils during the age of the Nayanmars. As mentioned earlier the Periyapurānam is well known as a Śaiva hagiology and is held in great veneration as the twelfth *Tirumuṟai*. At the outset one may regard it as a religious literature only. But that it is more than that is established in the book.

The definition of 'Culture' in terms of Indian attitude towards life, the Tamil concept of *Paṇṇāḍu*, the relative value of literature as source material for reconstructing the history of the Tamils, the historical value of the Periyapurānam, the contemporaneity of Sekkilar with Kulōt-tuṅga II, Sekkilar's objective presentation of the lives of the Nayanmars, and the arrangement of the text of the Periyapurānam have been discussed in the Introduction.

In the chapter on the Age of the Nayanmars some of the vital points provided by the Periyapurānam in fixing the dates of various Chēra, Chōḷa, Pāṇḍya and Pallava rulers have been analysed in detail. This has helped us to fix the lower and upper chronological limits of the period of the Nayanmars. The life-histories of a few Nayanmars such as Kūṟṟuva Nayanar and Mūrti Nayanar provide rare and useful information in understanding the Kaḷabhra rule which is regarded as the "Dark Period" in South Indian History.

Sekkilar, having himself been the Prime Minister in the Chōḷa country, has given us a vivid picture of the Tamil polity. Even minute details relating to the duties of the king, succession, coronation, abdication, capital cities, functions of ministers, administration of justice and

composition of the armed forces could be gathered from the Periyapurānam.

The Periyapurānam contains a mine of information in understanding almost every aspect of social life of the Tamils. In spite of the existence of the caste system in society there seem to have prevailed harmony among the various groups. Further the lives of the Nayanmars show that caste was never an obstacle in establishing communion with God. The standard of living could be inferred from the variety of food, jewels, ornaments, dresses, cosmetics and dwelling places mentioned in the Periyapurānam. Social functions and social customs prevailing at that time are described in detail by Sekkilar.

As a Saiva hagiology it is for the religious history of the Tamils that the Periyapurānam stands as an invaluable source. Details relating to the various sects in Saivism, modes of worship, rituals, festivals, pilgrimage, philosophical concepts, myths and miracles connected with the individual lives of the Nayanmars are found in the Periyapurānam. The status held by Jainism and Buddhism in the Tamil country during the time of the Nayanmars could also be found in the Periyapurānam.

The distinction that the Tamils had attained in the field of education and literature during the age of the Nayanmars is well brought out in the Periyapurānam. The traditional *gurukula* system of learning, the initiation ceremony, the functioning of different kinds of schools, the Jain *paḷḷis* (monasteries), and the Saiva *maṭhas* are described in detail by Sekkilar. Of the sixty-three Nayanmars eight distinguished themselves as learned scholars by their compositions. They include the *Tēvāram* trio. There is no doubt that Sekkilar made extensive use of them in writing the hagiology.

The excellence and perfection attained in various fields of fine arts such as temple architecture, sculpture, iconography, painting, music and dance as depicted in the Periyapurānam bear testimony to the cultural achievements of the Tamils.

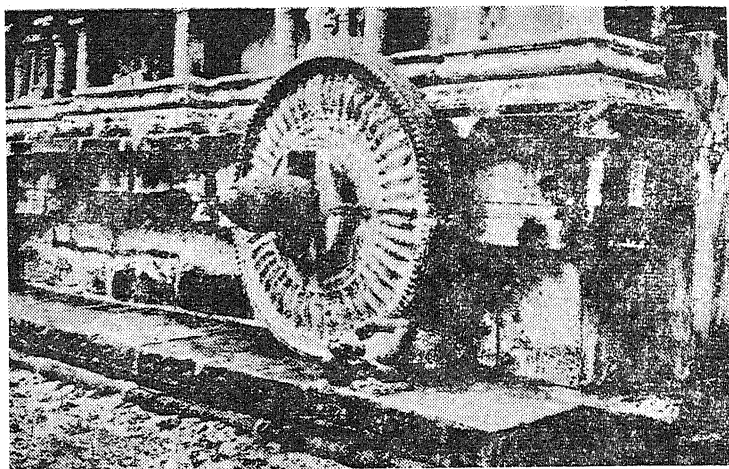
A thorough and critical study of similar elaborate works in Tamil literature belonging to different periods may shed more light in reconstructing the cultural history of the Tamils. But a student of history has to be cautious in distinguishing facts from supernatural and mythical accounts contained in them. Certain auxiliary skills such as a sound knowledge of Tamil language and literature, and the art of reading inscriptions will be highly useful to those working on the history of the Tamils.

To conclude, one may agree with a Tamil scholar from Sri Lanka who has stated that "the study of the social patterns of living of the Tamils, as gleaned from Periyapurānam, will enable the modern Tamilian wherever he is, and whatever work he is called upon to do" to see his old faith in a new depth."¹

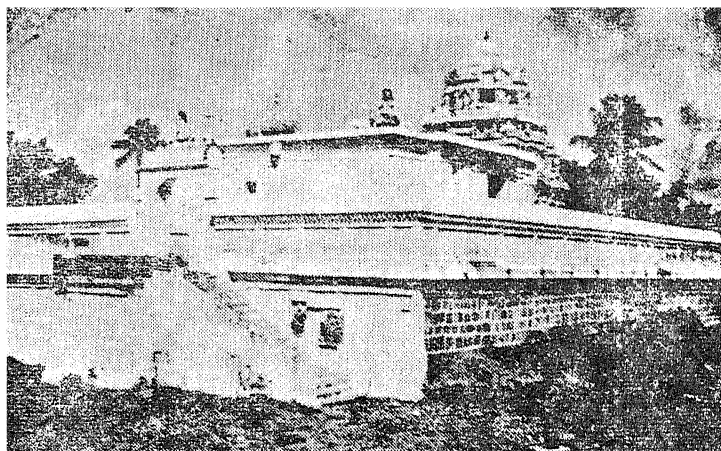
1 Ratna Navaratnam, "Periyapurānam as a Gateway to a New Social Order", in *Kaḷāka-p-pon viḷā malar*, p. 220.



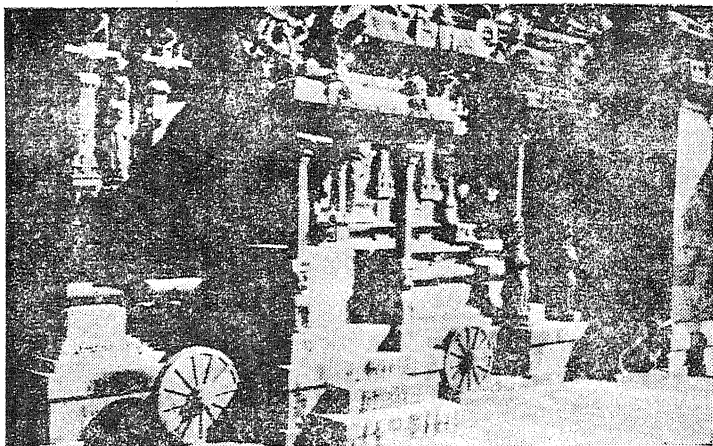
Amarniti Nāyanār, his wife and child
at Paḷayārai.



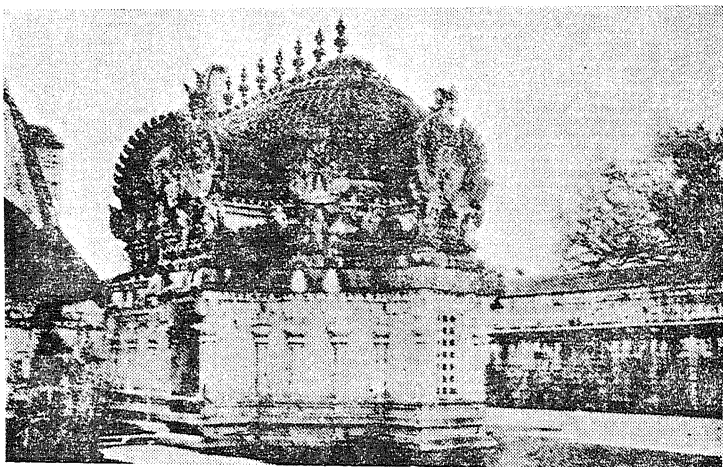
Stone wheel of the chariot and the son of
Manu Nīdi Chōḷa beneath it
at Tiruvārūr.



Maḍakkoiḷ at Paḷayāṛai



Karakköil at Mēlaikkaḍambūr



Tūḡānai māḍam at Peṇṇāḡaḍam

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Glimpses of Tamil Culture based on Periyapurāṇam by Dr. K. Nambi Arooran is a valuable addition to the recent researches in English on the history of the Tamils. The author has made an intensive study of the *Periyapurāṇam*, along with the other source-material bearing on the topic. The various facets of the Tamil society in the age of the Nayanmars (A. D. 4th century to 9th century) have been critically examined and presented in a lucid form. The discussions on some important problems pertaining to the society and culture of the Tamils are extremely useful and convincing. Particular mention may be made of the chapters on Religion which contain new insights into the religion-oriented culture of the Tamils during the period under survey.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. K. Nambi Arooran was born in 1942 in Tanjore District, Tamilnadu. He took his Master's Degree in History from Madras Christian College and secured a first class and the first rank. He was awarded M. Litt., degree by the Madras University in 1969 for his thesis entitled *Culture of the Tamils as revealed by the Periyapurāṇam*, which now appears in the above said book form. From 1966 to 1972 he was teaching at Presidency College, Madras. In 1972 he was awarded a Commonwealth Academic Staff Scholarship which enabled him to obtain the Ph. D., degree from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, in 1976. The dissertation is entitled: *The Tamil Renaissance and Dravidian Nationalism, 1905-1944, with special reference to the works of Maṟaimalai Aṭikal*. Since 1976 he has been teaching at the Institute of Correspondence Course, Madurai University.